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A
FREE ANSWER
TO
Dr. MIDDLETON's
FREE INQUIRY
INTO THE
MIRACULOUS POWERS
OF THE
PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By WILLIAM DODWELL, M.A.
Rector of Shottesbrook, Berks. Kp

L O N D O N :

Printed for S. BIRT, at the *Bible and Ball* in *Ave-Mary-Lane* : And Sold by R. CLEMENTS,
J. FLETCHER, and J. BARRETT, in *Oxford*.

M DCC XLIX.

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MIRACULOUS POWERS

BY JAMES THOMAS

PRIMUS CHURCH

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR.

THE MIRACULOUS POWERS

BY JAMES THOMAS

PREFACE

PREFACE

THE following Performance
was really, what it is said to
be, a Letter to a Friend, in-
tended only for private Perusal. But
having farther communicated it to se-
veral others, whose Judgment I have
great Reason to value, I met with the
concurring Advice of all to commit it
to the Press. I mention this to excuse
the Familiarity of Style which may
perhaps appear in it, and which proba-
bly had not been indulged, had it been
originally designed for publick View:
Not that I am sensible that any impro-
per Liberty has been taken with Dr.
Middleton, which might need any Apo-
logy; he has himself set a Pattern of
treating great Men and their Opinions
with the utmost Freedom, and has no
Reason to complain, if his own Exam-
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P R E F A C E.

ple has in this Respect been followed. A Regard to Truth, and a Desire of propagating it in Opposition to that which appears to us to be a dangerous Error, he will allow to be justifiable and laudable; and I will not scruple to own that I am apprehensive of worse Consequences from his State of the Case, however intended, than he can be from the former Regard paid to the Testimony of the Primitive Fathers. The Question is important, and I have delivered my Sentiments upon it with Sincerity and Earnestness. The World has a Right to judge of the Validity of the Arguments, and will not I hope find a Defect of that Sort supplied by a Profusion of hard Names.



DEAR SIR,

LSend you now, according to Promise, my Opinion at large of Dr. Middleton's Performance. His *Introductory Discourse* has been considered by others, and I shall confine my Remarks to his *Preface* and the *Inquiry* itself, which he has lately presented us with. The former is calculated to prepossess the Reader in his Favour; though I must own, that *Self-Commendation*, and an *abusive* Representation of Persons in a *different* Sentiment, do not bias me in Favour of any Author. "His own Nature" he tells you (p. 7.) "is frank and open, and warmly disposed to seek and speak the Truth." His Opinions are likewise disinterested, for, in his own elegant Phrase, "he was never trained to pace in the Trammels."

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“ mels of the Church,” and therefore owns that he “ is not so scrupulous perhaps in REGARD to the Consequences of what he has “ advanced, as many of his Profession are apt to be.” The professed Intent of his Inquiry is “ an honest and disinterested View of freeing the Minds of Men from an inveterate Imposture, which, through a long Succession of Ages, has disgraced the Religion “ of the Gospel,” (p. 31.) and the Means of doing this useful Service to Mankind is by shewing that “ the ancient Fathers were extremely credulous and superstitious, and “ scrupled no Art or Means to propagate their Opinions.” This Argument, he tells you, is of the greatest Importance to the Protestant Religion, and the sole Expedient, which can effectually secure it from being gradually undermined and finally subverted by the Efforts of Rome,” (p. 3.) and, to influence farther the Judgment of others, we are assured, that his Performance has already every where received the general Approval of those whose Authority he chiefly values.” After this Account of his own excellent Qualifications for this Work, and his extraordinary Success in it, let us next view his Account of those, who are likely to appear against him.

against him. The Opposition to it is owing
 " to Prejudice, Bigotry and Superstition."
 (p. 2.) His Adversaries fight for Pay, and
 through a blind Deference to Authority, think
 the Credibility of a Witness sufficient to evince
 the Certainty of all Facts indifferently,
 " whether natural or supernatural, probable or
 " improbable, knowing no Distinction be-
 " tween Faith and Credulity," (p. 5,) and
 again they are described under the Character of
 " fierce Bigots, hypocritical Zealots and inte-
 " rested Politicians." (p. 8.) The Charge lies
 both against their *Honesty* and their *Understand-
 ing*, and is the very same Declamation that
 Infidels use against the Defenders of Revela-
 tion. But if Providence has joined our *Interest*
 and *Duty*, why should it be an Impeachment
 of the *Truth* of any Doctrine, or of the *Inte-
 grity* of the Advocates for it, that it is an *use-
 ful* and *profitable* Doctrine? The Objection, if
 carried on, would end in *Atheism*, for surely
 we are strongly *interested* in the Belief of a
 Deity. But though it is no Objection to a *real*
 Truth, that it is likewise a *serviceable* one, yet
 it would be hard to shew, in this Case, how the
 Defenders of the primitive Miracles are parti-
 cularly *interested* in this Article, especially if,
 as this Author asserts, the Denial of them no

way affects the Faith of History, and is the only support of Protestantism. Besides, if we were disposed to make Reprizals, we might observe, that Disappointment and Resentment work as strongly on Mens Minds as Prospects and Expectations, and do as much bias their Judgments in the Search after Truth. But, after all, the Merits of the Cause depend not on such Insinuations, and it is an *unworthy Art* in this Writer to prepossess his Readers with such a Notion of the *mercenary* Views of his Opposers. If his Arguments are clear and convincing, they do not *need* such Prepossessions; if they are weak and inconclusive, those Prepossessions will not *strengthen* them. To proceed therefore to the Point in Question, which is thus stated. The present Question, concerning the Reality of the miraculous Powers of the primitive Church, depends on the joint
 " Credibility of the Facts, pretended to
 " have been produced by those Powers, and
 " of the Witnesses, who attest them. If either
 " Part be infirm, their Credit must sink in
 " Proportion; and if the Facts especially be
 " incredible, must of Course fall to the Ground,
 " because no Force of Testimony can alter
 " the Nature of Things." (p. 9.) If the Mean-
 " ing of this be, that no Testimony can make
CHAP. 10. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. *Falshood*

Falshood to become *Truth*, it may readily be allowed; but this is a Discovery scarce worthy the Pomp of the Introduction, or the Name of the Author; nor has it any Relation to the present Subject. But if the Meaning be, that no Testimony can be sufficient to prove, that the Nature of Things may be altered, that is, that the established Laws of Nature can at any Time be over-ruled or reversed, this is a Declaration against the Possibility of *all* Miracles, and would invalidate the Testimony of the *Apostles* as well as of the *Primitive Christians*. Yet I scarce know how to understand in any other Sense the following Sentence, which is brought in as explanatory of the former.

“The Testimony of Facts, as it is offered to our Senses, in this wonderful Fabric and Constitution of Things, may properly be called the Testimony of God himself; as it carries with it the surest Instruction in all Cases and to all Nations, which in the ordinary Course of his Providence he has thought fit to appoint for the Conduct of human Life.” (p. 10.) The *saving Clause* here inserted seems to me to destroy the whole Intent of this choice Collection of Words. The Fabrick of the World may be called the *Testimony of God in the ordinary Course of his Providence*,

Providence, but for that Reason it is not the
surest Instruction in *all* Cases, that is, not in
extraordinary ones, which is the Case in View
before us. I should imagine the Meaning of
this Sentence to be, that the Evidence of the
known Course of Nature was stronger than any
Evidence could be of the *Reversal* of it;
which amounts to a Denial of all supernatural
Works. I would not charge this as the po-
sitive *Design* of the Author, since it is *incon-
sistent* with his Concessions in other Places;
but I may observe, that one, who has his
Command of Words, might speak clearly if
he pleased; and that in this Case his Argu-
ment cannot be cleared of *Impertinence* or *In-
consistency*. If he meant, that the established
Course of Nature is a standing Proof of an
Author of Nature, this is true, but nothing to
his Purpose; if he meant, that no Testimony
of an Interruption of it can be equal to such
a Point, this is much to his Purpose, but is
in itself false and unchristian.

Next to this obscure and unmeaning Objection
concerning the *Incredibility* of *all* *supernatural* Ef-
fects in themselves, he proceeds to an Observati-
on, which, if true, was certainly likely to prove
to the Advantage of his Cause; namely, that
“ if any Credit be due to the Church Histo-
rians

"rians in this Case, it must reach either to all
 "or none," (p. 16.) the Consequence of which
 would be, that if he could disprove any *one*
 Relation of this Kind, the *rest* must fall with
 it. But we may well inquire, why this must
 needs be so? There is a plain and obvious Rea-
 son why it should be otherwise. If the Power
 of Miracles was known to be frequent in the
 Church, it was easy to foresee, that *wicked*
 Men would take Advantage of this to obtrude
false Pretensions upon the World; and that
Good Men, who knew the Truth of some su-
 pernatural Interpositions, might, upon *less Exam-*
nation, admit the Appearances of it in other
 Cases. But says he, "the Characters of the
 "Persons attesting, and the Nature of Things
 "attested, were of equal Force in all Ages as
 "in one." (*ibid.*) If this were entirely so,
 yet the *Occasion* of the Interposition, by a Mi-
 racle, might be one Circumstance of great Im-
 portance in the Determination of a wise Man's
 Assent; and this certainly was not the same in
 all Instances. But neither is it true, that the
 Characters of the Persons attesting, or that the
 Nature of the Things attested, were of equal
 Force in all Ages as in one. Though we
 should allow the equal Fidelity of the Post-
 Nicene as of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, yet a

Succession

Succeſſion of Miracles for three hundred Years might probably have inclined the latter to more *Credulity* in Facts which they related upon the Report of others. Neither is the Nature of the Things attested the ſame. The former ſpeak of a *constant*, a *frequent* Exercise at leaſt, of miraculous Powers reſiding among them. The latter attest *particular* Facts, which, if true, were undoubtely ſupernatural. But this makes a great Difference in the Case. It ſeems moſt probable that this Power gradually decreased, and that *occasional* Miracles for particular Purpoſes lasted much longer than what may be ſtrictly called *the Age of Miracles*. When therefore this Writer insists on ascertaining the *precise Duration* of them, (p. 17.) he insists on a Point not at all neceſſary in itſelf to the Question before us; but which may be determined differently by thoſe who believe the main Article. He knows that the moſt general Opinion is, that they ceaſed upon the *Civil Establishment* of Christianity; and yet, probably, many wonderful Works were afterwards wrought for ſome great Ends and Reasons.

His own Account of the Design of thoſe Miracles that he does admit, namely, thoſe of Christ and his Apostles, may obviate many of

of his own Insinuations. He allows it to be a
 " Postulatum, which all will grant, that they
 " lasted as long as they were necessary to the
 " Church" (p. 11.) And his own professed
 Opinion is, that they were given " to enable
 " the first Preachers, more easily to over-rule
 " the inveterate Prejudices both of the Jews
 " and Gentiles, and to bear up against the dis-
 couraging Shocks of popular Rage and Per-
 secution.—But when they had laid a Foun-
 dation sufficient to sustain the great Fabric
 designed to be erected upon it, and, by an
 invincible Courage, had conquered the first
 and principal Difficulties, and planted
 Churches in all the chief Cities of the
 Roman Empire, and settled a regular Mi-
 nistry to succeed them in the Government
 of the same, it may reasonably be presumed,
 that as the Benefit of miraculous Powers be-
 gan to be less and less wanted in Proporti-
 on to the Increase of those Churches, so the
 Use and Exercise of them began gradually
 to decline; and as soon as Christianity had
 gained an Establishment in every Quarter of
 the known World, that they were finally
 withdrawn." (p. 28, 29.) This is, I think,
 the general Account, only few will join with
 him in Opinion, that " all this may be

" thought to have happened, while some of
 " the Apostles were still living." (*ibid.*) We
 know that the severest Persecutions were *after*
 the apostolical Age, and that the Gospel was
 far from being received and established in every
 known Quarter of the World in their Time.
The Use of Miracles in over-ruling the in-
terate Prejudices of Gainsayers, and in
strengthening the Courage of Believers, was
as necessary *after* as *before* the Death of the
Apostles, and continued to be so till the Civil
Establishment of Religion. But then, says
 he, this Argument, " from the unconverted
 " State of the Heathen World, would hold
 " with equal Force through all Ages of the
 " World." (p. 18.) If it be so, yet this fol-
 lows as much from his own Account of
 the Intent of Miracles as from any others;
 and is not a Difficulty peculiar to his Oppo-
 sers. Neither do I see any Absurdity in *Gro-*
tuus's Opinion (as he has cited it p. 19,) in the
 cautious Manner in which he has stated it;
 but whether it will be allowed, or not, it af-
 fects not the present Question. For the Un-
 converted Heathens, in the *present Age* of the
 World, have several Calls on their Attention,
 which their Heathen Ancestors had not at the
 first Publication of the Gospel. They may
 now

now be informed, that many Nations of the most refined Understanding, and most improved Learning, have, upon Examination, received it; and this may be a proper Preparative and Admonition to *them* to look into the Reasonableness of the Doctrines, the Excellency of the Precepts, and the certain Attestation of the external Evidence of Christianity. Again, the Case of the Preachers, and of those to whom they preached, is not only *different* at this Time from what it was at first, but directly *contrary*. The Missionaries were then, as to mere human Endowments, *mean* and *illiterate*, and their proposed Converts were often *wise and learned*; and, without supernatural Gifts, the former had been no Way qualified to deal with the latter. Whereas the Case at present is directly otherwise. The Ignorance of *Pagans*, or even of *Mahometans*, is now so profound, and the whole Compass of real Learning lies so entirely among *Christians*, that their Missionaries do not need Miracles to distinguish them. Their Improvements in the Works of Nature and of Art, in Astronomy, in Mechanicks, in all useful Arts and Sciences, are considerable enough in themselves to raise the Attention of the poor *Heathens*, and have been successfully applied to that Purpose.

The *Romish* Fathers of the Mission, whatever Pretence they may sometimes make to miraculous Powers, have generally taken Care to qualify themselves with such Kinds of Knowledge, and have thereby attracted great Esteem to themselves and great Regard to their Doctrines, have obviated thereby many Exceptions which the Philosophers originally offered against Christianity, and, in many Places, have propagated it with good Success. For these Reasons I cannot think that his Observation is true, that "the Argument from the unconverted State of the Heathen World would hold with equal Force through all Ages of the World." Miracles do now, for the Reasons assigned, seem less necessary in the Point of awakening Attention, than they did at the original Promulgation and less general Reception of the Gospel. We cannot indeed determine antecedently concerning the *Necessity* of Miracles in such and such particular Cases; but we may *subsequently* offer such Arguments for the *Propriety of a divine Interposition*, where there is due Evidence for it; though this Author has, been pleased to confound these two very different Points, (p. 22.) We shall readily allow him the Truth of this Observation, and wish him to keep it in continual

nual Remembrance, that " it is rash and presumptuous to decide upon the Views and Motives of the Deity by the narrow Conceptions of human Reason." (*ibid.*) But how will this Charge of *Rashness* and *Presumption* be evaded by those, who so often presume to tell Him, that such and such Interpositions are unworthy his infinite Wisdom, when He has pleased to afford us satisfactory Evidence of the *Reality* of them. We shall readily allow him farther that " the whole, which the Wit of Man can possibly discover either of the Ways or Will of the Creator, must be acquired, not by imagining vainly within ourselves what may be proper or improper for him to do, but by looking abroad and contemplating what he has actually done." (*ibid.*) Let us then look fairly into the external Evidence of what he has actually done, and without Prepossessions judge impartially, whether there are not clear Proofs of his miraculous Interpositions, though we possibly might not have thought such Interpositions *necessary* or *expedient*? This one should have thought a fair Consequence from the forecited Concession, but his Intent is directly the contrary. For his Proposal of " looking abroad and contemplating what

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“the Creator has actually done,” is confined to a “serious Attention to that Revelation, which he made of himself from the Beginning, and placed continually before our Eyes in the wonderful Works and beautiful Fabric of this visible World.” (*ibid.*) If the Controversy was with the *Atheists*, this would be the proper Point in View for their Conviction; but how can an Appeal to the Wisdom of the Creator in the *Constitution of Nature*, determine the Question, whether there were any *supernatural* Interpositions after the Times of the Apostles? The Insinuation, if it means any thing, means the *Incredibility* that the Laws of Nature at first fixed by the great Creator, should, on any Occasion, be *reversed*; and the Frequency of the same Suggestion will scarce permit one to understand him in any other Sense. Thus he elsewhere observes, “how fallacious the Judgment of the wisest will ever be found, when deserting the Path of Nature and Experience, and giving the Reins to Fancy and Conjecture, they attempt to illustrate the secret Councils of Providence.” (*p. 20.*) Now what does he here mean by *deserting the Path of Nature and Experience*, but giving in to the Belief of *any* Miracles, and acknowledging the Reality

Reality of Events contrary to the known Effects of the established Laws of Nature? If this be not his Meaning, it is certainly nothing at all to his Purpose; for why might not the same Author, for the same wise Ends, enable the first Christians to work Miracles as well after as before the Decease of the Apostles? The Belief of the one is as much *deserting the Path of Nature* and present *Experience*, as that of the other; the Argument contained in such Insinuations, if it proves any Thing, proves too much for his Purpose, and is inconsistent with his own Concessions: So that we may return him the Compliment which he makes to one of his Opposers, of "betraying a great Want either of Judgment or Sincerity." (p. 18.) The Truth is, the *Revelation*, as he calls it, which God has made of himself in the wonderful Works and beautiful Fabrick of this visible World, may well convince us of the infinite Wisdom and Power of the divine Architect; and the natural Consequence from hence is, that He can, with equal Ease, whenever He pleases, *reverse* these established Laws of Nature, which are of his own Appointment. In what Instances he will think fit to do this, we are not competent Judges so as to determine before hand that he will do so; but here

here comes in very properly this Author's prescribed Rule of judging (which is just in itself though inconsistent in him) "not by imagining vainly within ourselves, what may be proper or improper for him to do, but by looking abroad and contemplating what He has actually done." But then we must no more limit his Power than prescribe to his Wisdom; we must no more assert profanely that He cannot interpose, than decree presumptuously that He will, but must, like reasonable Creatures, be determined by reasonable Evidence, and avoid the Extremes both of Credulity and Infidelity.

His Remark that "miraculous Powers, when once conferred by our Lord on any of his Disciples, were not ever after perpetually inherent in them" (p. 23.) as far as it is true, is neither new nor any way serviceable to his Cause. But the Case, I apprehend, is not accurately stated by him. They had these miraculous Powers constantly inherent in them, but only capable of being exerted on the Occasions for which they were given. They could not have applied them to support a wrong Cause, no, nor any one that was foreign to the Evidence of Christianity; but they always had it in their Power to work Miracles

In Attestation of the Gospel. Our Saviour had expressly promised them, that if they had *Faith*, they should be able to remove Mountains, and if this *Faith* was *habitual*, the Promise was express, that the Ability of working Wonders should be so too. This *Faith of Miracles* was in Truth a very rational Assent; It was a Confidence in the promised extraordinary Assistance of God, that He would not fail to support them in the Defence of His own Cause, but would enable them to reverse even the Laws of Nature on any Emergency worthy such an Interposition, and where no inferior Assistance would be sufficient. But their own Reason would tell them, that their *private Satisfaction* or *Advantage* was not a sufficient Cause to over-rule or supersede the fixed Laws of Nature, and therefore in such Cases they had not *this Faith*, that is, they had not the Confidence to expect, that Providence would by them miraculously interpose for their particular Pleasure: But when by the very same Method the *Conviction* of *Unbelievers* might probably be brought about, then they reasonably presumed that this was a Cause worthy of God, and in this *Faith* undertook and executed the most supernatural Works. Thus though St. Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick,

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when he certainly wished him well, but could not undertake to work a Miracle for his Relief, yet he healed the Sick among the Heathens without Hesitation or Danger of Failure; because he knew these were the Cases to which the divine Promises related. In this Sense therefore I think we may say, that the Apostles had these miraculous Powers *perpetually inherent* in them; not meaning that they could exert them on *all* Occasions, however *different*, or however *trifling*, but that they could always exert them on all *proper* Occasions. There is a great deal of Difference between his Representation, as if they were " imparted only at the Moment of their Exertions, which by some special Impulse was notified at the same Time to the Agent, and as soon as those particular Occasions were served, were withdrawn again and suspended; and the Agents reduced to the Condition of all other Men;" there is I say a great deal of Difference between this *his* Representation, and that Limitation which he cites from *Grotius* (p. 29.) and which we readily admit, " that these wonderful Faculties were severally distributed to each faithful Disciple, yet not so as to be exerted of themselves, or at Pleasure, but reserved to special Occasions." But whenever

whenever such Occasions happened, they were at any Time ready to testify their miraculous Endowments, and therefore were not reduced to the Condition of all other Men. I am not aware against whom he intended this Remark, as I know of none that do not allow of *Grotius's* Comment, or that think that the first Christians could have worked Miracles for their own Purposes only ; but I shall have Occasion however hereafter to make Use of this Author's Sense of the Matter, against himself.

There are several other Passages in the *Preface*, which would deserve Notice, but that they occur again in the Book more at large, and are to be considered, in their proper Place. I shall only remark further on the *Method of answering* which he has prescribed to his Opposers. He tells us, (p. 34, 35.) that “the only way of answering, which can satisfy Men of Sense, and affect or invalidate the Force of his Argument, is to shew how the Testimonies of the Fathers concerning Miracles were verified by Facts ; --- and that their Interpretations of Scripture are answerable to their Pretensions of Inspiration.” To the latter, which is repeated again and again in the Book, I shall answer hereafter : And with Respect to

the former, I think that the Testimony of the primitive Father's may be sufficiently vindicated without it, at least in the Manner that he has stated it. He says that "when any of them tell us, that many were raised from the Dead in their Days in every Place where there was a Church, and lived afterwards several Years among them; and that others were heard to speak in all Kinds of Languages, these Answerers must shew what particular Persons were so raised and indited with Languages; or must alledge at least some special Effects of those Miracles credibly reported by the ancient Writers, either Heathens or Christians"; that is plainly, we must go farther in the Account than they have done themselves, and add to their Report, or else in his Judgment we say nothing to the Purpose. But why are not those Writers credible Witnesses in what they have said, merely because they have not said more, and been as circumstantial as our Curiosity might have wished? He had told us at first (p. 9.) that the present Question depended on the joint Credibility of the Facts and of the Witnesses who attest them: And why may not both these be satisfactorily vindicated, without naming the particular Persons who wrought the

the Miracles, or on whom they were wrought, or all the Consequences that followed from them? One great and important Consequence is often mentioned and triumphed in, namely the Reception of the Gospel by Means of the supernatural Works wrought in Defence of it. This was much to their Purpose, and they probably did not foresee any Reason to be more Particular in their Account. We may therefore reasonably hold him to the first State of the Question, and join Issue upon it, concerning the Credibility of the Facts, and of the Witnesses, without descending to the Particulars that he now insists on. If Miracles are not *incredible* in themselves, and if Rooting out inveterate Prejudices be a *proper Occasion* for them (and this Author's Concessions in some Places at least will save us the Trouble of proving these Points) and if there be positive Evidences of their being wrought from Witnesses, who were *competently informed* and *honestly disposed* to speak the Truth, then we may vindicate the Miracles of the Primitive Church to the Satisfaction of Men of Sense, notwithstanding what he has offered to the contrary, and without proceeding so far as he has prescribed to us.

I come now to the Performance itself, and shall consider distinctly the several Steps by which he endeavours to make good his Point. — The first is by a Collection of the principal Testimonies relating to the miraculous Gifts of the Church, with some Remarks on them to invalidate their Force. And of these the first is, that “ in all the several Pieces of the apostolical Fathers there is not the least Claim or Pretension to any of those extraordinary Gifts, which are the Subject of this Inquiry” (p. 3.) and the Inference drawn from hence is, that “ there is the strongest Reason to presume, that the extraordinary Gifts of the apostolic Age were by this Time actually withdrawn.” (p. 9.) Let us examine the Truth of the Position, and the Force of the Consequence drawn from it.

That the *apostolick* Fathers do not *enlarge* on the miraculous Powers of the Church, and challenge the Heathens to see and examine them in the Manner that some *After-Writers* do; is readily admitted; and the plain Reason was, that they were not writing to *Heathens* who needed *Conversion*, but to their own *Disciples* who needed *Instruction* or *Admonition*. Had they addressed themselves to their *Persecutors*, as some of the Christian Apologists afterwards

terwards did, and had omitted the Claim of miraculous Powers, this would have been much to the Purpose; but as their Epistles were directed to those who were already *Converts*, if there be any *incidental* Mention in them of such supernatural Endowments, it is as much as can reasonably be expected, and more than could necessarily be demanded. Now this Author allows, that "they speak indeed in general of certain *spiritual* Gifts as abounding among the Christians of that Age," but his Answer to this Testimony is, that "these cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean any Thing more than the ordinary Gifts and Graces of the Gospel." (p. 3.) If we ask why they cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean more, there is no Cause assigned. It was not suitable to his Hypothesis, that they *should* mean any Thing more, and therefore his Judgment is, that they *do not*. But this is begging the Question instead of proving it, and resting the Controversy on his own Authority.

There is indeed one Insinuation, which would have been very *material*, if it would have born Examination, but it is introduced so as to shew his own *Distrust* of it; and it is wonderful that a Man of his Abilities should

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not abuse so sink it entirely. After having repeated his own Determination, that "all those Expressions of the Fathers, which are commonly understood to signify the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, may be interpreted more rationally to denote only the ordinary Graces of the Gospel," he adds, "but in some Places they seem to disclaim all Gifts of a more extraordinary Kind." (p. 7.) The Instances given to illustrate this seeming *disclaiming* of the Power of Miracles, are those Passages of St. Polycarp to the Philippians, and of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians; wherein the former says, that "he cannot come up to the Wisdom of the blessed and renowned Paul, nor curb his Passions within the lawful Degree;" and the latter, that "he was no extraordinary Person, nor as yet perfect in Christ Jesus." Now what do these Expressions prove but their deep Humility and open Signification? Does not St. Paul say the same Thing in his Epistle to the Philippians, almost in the same Words? And did any Man ever think that he meant thereby to *disclaim* the Power of Miracles? If these Testimonies had any Relation to the Subject of Miracles, I should rather conclude from St. Ignatius's saying that he was *no extraordinary Person*, that miraculous

miraculous Powers were so common among all Believers, that their *Bishops* or *Teachers* were not distinguished in that Particular. But I presume it is not necessary to say any thing farther against their disclaiming these supernatural Gifts.

He attempts however to shew the Weakness of the Arguments alledged by Archbishop *Wake* and *my Father* from the Testimonies of those apostolical Writers for the Continuance of miraculous Powers among them. And in the first Place he observes that “ the “ Archbishop endeavours to confirm his Op-“ nion not by any Facts or express Testimo-“ nies drawn from themselves, but by Infe-“ rences only or Conjectures.” (p. 4.) Now this, for the Reason before given, was all the Evidence that the Nature of the Argument could reasonably admit. As they were not arguing in these Epistles with *Jews* or *Heathens*, as their Successors did, and had therefore no Occasion to relate any particular Facts, or to challenge their Readers to see, examine, and consider their Miracles in general ; as they were writing, I say, to their own *professed Disciples*, who did not want to be informed of such their Endowments ; if there be any Reference to them, and it can be shewn by *Inference*

rence that they did thus refer to them, this I should think would be a very proper Method of proceeding in a Defender of their miraculous Powers, and might be satisfactory to *every impartial Inquirer*. This Method the Archbishop wisely proceeded in. He has shewn what Reason there is to presume in their Favour, that they were distinguished with supernatural Endowments; he has observed that Qualifications of this Sort were considered in the Choice of the *inferior Officers* of the Church, and therefore much more, 'tis likely, in the Designation of *Superiors* to their Office; --- that these Writers in particular were chosen to preside over the Church by the *Apostles* themselves, who had the Gift of *discerning Spirits*; --- that some of them are mentioned by *Name* in the sacred Writings as Persons of great Endowments; --- that miraculous Gifts are spoken of in the *New Testament* as given often to *common Believers*, and therefore more strongly to be supposed to be communicated to these *more eminent Persons*; --- that as we find Miracles not infrequent in the *apostolical Times*, so immediately after, (it being proper to insist on them against Gainsayers) we find *Justin Martyr* boasting of them against *Trypho the Jew*, and urging them as an unanswerable Argument in

the

the Behalf of *Christianity* and against the *Jews*, from whom these Gifts had a long Time been departed. (*Wake's Prelim. Disc.* p. 165.) With these Presumptions in Favour of these apostolical Writers, he proceeds to those Testimonies, wherein they *do refer* to these miraculous Gifts ; and the first which he alledges is, I think, very strong to the Purpose, both the Expressions, and the Reasonings upon them, suiting better to the Notion of *extraordinary Endowments* than of *ordinary Graces*. The Passage referred to is in the first Epistle of St. Clement to the *Corinthians*. Ἡτω τις Πιεῖσθαι, ἥτω δυνατός γράψιν ὀξειπένην, ἥτω σοφὸς ἐν δικαιᾳ χρίσει λόγων — τοσύτῳ μᾶλλον ταπεινοφρονεῖν ὄφειλει, οὐσω δοκεῖ μᾶλλον μείζων εἶναι· καὶ ζητεῖν τὸ κοινωφελὲς πᾶσιν; καὶ μὴ τὸ ἑαυτῷ. Which the Archbishop translates and paraphrases thus. “ *Let a Man have Faith*, i. e. “ such a Faith by which he is able to work “ *Miracles*; *Let him be Powerful to utter mysti-“ cal Knowledge*, for to that his Expression ma-“ nifestly relates) *Let him be Wise in discerning“ Speeches*, another Gift common in those “ Times, but still, says he, *by how much the“ more he seems to excel others*, viz. upon the “ Account of these extraordinary Endowments, “ *by so much the more will it be above him to be“ Humble-minded, and to seek what is profitable*

"to all Men, and not to his own Advantage." (p. 166.) To this Citation no Answer is vouchsafed, and therefore, as he does not attempt to *invalidate* it, I shall not offer to *reinforce* it. The Proof of the *prophetical* Gifts of *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, which the Archbishop adds to the foregoing Testimony, are favoured with a Remark, which I shall take Notice of presently,

My Father's Proofs of the Continuance of miraculous Powers in the Church are next recited with Contempt. He had inferred from St. *Ignatius*'s Address to the Church of *Smyrna*, as blessed with every good Gift, and wanting in no good Gift, that Miracles subsisted in great Abundance in those Days, "Yet," says Dr. *M.* "these Words, as explained by the Context, manifestly signify nothing more than the ordinary Gifts of the Gospel, *Faith* and *Charity*, for the whole Passage runs thus, 'To the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which God hath mercifully filled with Faith and Charity so as to be wanting in no good Gift.'" Dr. *M.* has been so just indeed as to put the Greek in the Margin, so that I think none but the *English* Reader can be in any Danger of being deceived by his Translation.

The

The Original runs thus. Ἡλικίαιν οὐ μάτι
 χαρισμάτι πεπληροφορημένη ἐν πάσῃ καὶ αὐτοῖς,
 αἰνυτερίτω εὖτε πάντας χαρισμάτος. Now
 these Words will very well bear all the Stress
 that my Father has laid upon them. For the
 Term χάρισμα, here translated a good Gift, is
 well known to be that which is peculiarly
 appropriated to signify an *extraordinary Endow-
 ment*. Neither is it here “ explained by
 “ the Context, as manifestly to signify no
 “ more than the ordinary Graces of the Gos-
 “ pel,” as Dr. M. affirms. For the Words
 which he has inserted, as thus explanatory,
 after Faith and Charity, *so as to be wanting*
 &c. are inserted without Authority. The
 Original is no more than “ to the Church,
 “ &c. mercifully blessed; with every extraor-
 “ dinary Gift, being filled with Faith and
 “ Charity, being wanting in no extraordinary
 “ Gift.” The *Repetition* of the Mention of
 these Endowments is *no more* a Difficulty in
 this Interpretation, than in Dr. M. nay it is
 less so, for it is repeated because of the *extra-
 ordinary* Nature of these Gifts, and to distin-
 guish them from the ordinary Graces of *Faith*
 and *Charity*. St. Ignatius first reminds them
 of the great Mercy that they had received in
 such *singular* Gifts, tacitly commends their

Application

Application of them in *Belief* and *Benevolence*, and then again specifies the *Universality* of their Endowments. And this, according to the obvious Sense of the Words, and the known Use of them at that Time, appears to be a plain Proof of that, which it was brought to support, namely, the Continuance of extraordinary Gifts in the Church at that Time. There is however a *marginal Note* inserted, intended to take off the Force of a Remark so easy to be foreseen. Two Passages are referred to in St. Clement's first Epistle, wherein a *large Effusion of the Holy Spirit*, and the *Gift of God*, even that called *χάρισμα*, are said to appear by the *Context* to mean no more than pious Affections, or natural and acquired Abilities. But I see no such Thing in the *Context*, the Sense of those Passages is full as *rational* and as *strong*, if in both Places we interpret them strictly of *supernatural* Endowments. The Case in Truth was this. The primitive Writers, when they mention these extraordinary Gifts in their Addresses to *Unbelievers*, urge them as *Evidences* of the *Truth* of their Religion; but when they mention them to *Believers*, They press them as earnest *Motives* to true *Piety* and *Holiness*. This *different Application* and Improvement of them to *different Persons*,

Persons, was wise and just, and shews that they thoroughly understood their proper Use and Force.

But as Dr. M. always calls for particular Facts, and thinks them much more convincing than general Attestations, my Father has here beforehand presented him with one, in the earnest Request of *Ignatius* to the *Romans*, “ that they would not, by an unseasonable good Will, prevent his Martyrdom, but would suffer him to be Food for the wild Beasts:” From whence it is inferred, that the Prayers of the primitive Christians had Power to disable the wild Beasts from assaulting the Martyrs who were exposed to them. “ But” says Dr. M. “ the Passage itself has not the least Reference to Prayers, or to any thing miraculous, but to the ordinary Endeavours and Intercession of the Christian Brethren at Rome, who offered to use their Interest to preserve him from the cruel Death which he was then going to suffer.” (p. 6.) In Answer to which I would observe, that there is no Intimation, in the Epistle cited by my Father, of their *using* Interest to preserve him, but there is express and direct Reference to their *Prayers* both just before and after the Passage cited. Almost immediately before he had said

only

only pray for me that God would give me Strength; that I may not only be called a Christian, but may also be found one. I am willing to die for God unless you binder me. I beseech you that you shew not an unseasonable Good-will towards me. Suffer me to be Food to the wild Beasts, by which Means I shall go unto God.—And then presently subjoins, pray therefore unto Christ for me that by these Instruments I may be made the Sacrifice of God. "Tis true, he does not in express Words say by what Method they could prevent his Martyrdom, and shew this unseasonable Good-will towards him, but, by the *Antithesis*, in which he repeatedly tells them how they should promote it, his Meaning is plainly enough distinguishable. It amounts almost to as much as if he had said, " instead of endeavouring to preserve me miraculously by your Prayers, pray rather that I may glorify God in this Method, and be thereby the more speedily advanced to his Presence." This is no strained Construction, but the most plain and obvious Sense of it, and the Difficulty of putting any other Sense upon it, is a strong Confirmation of this. I am sure there is as much Authority from this Epistle, to say that he meant that they should not rescue him by Force, as that they should not

not make Interest for him. The former perhaps was possible, but the latter I believe will appear to be otherwise. But says Dr. M. "to this Sense," (that is, of preserving him by their Interest) "it is expressly restrained in the Relation of his Martyrdom, written by those who accompanied him in this very Journey, and were present at his Death: By whom we are told; that the Brethren, who came out to meet him on his Approach to that City, and were zealous for his Safety, undertook to appease the People, so that when he came to be exposed to the wild Beasts in the Amphitheatre, they should not desire his Destruction; but the Saint overruled, and commanded them to be quiet." (*ibid.*) This sounds somewhat to his Purpose, but will not bear Examination. The Words, though cited as from the Original, are different from those which stand there, and are a little improved to answer his Purpose. The real History may most literally be translated thus. *But to some he enjoined Silence who in the Zeal of their Hearts were speaking to restrain the People from desiring the Death of the Just.* Τισὶ δὲ καὶ ωρίγγελλεν ἡσυχάζουσιν, ζέονται καὶ λέγουσι καταπαύειν τὸν δῆμον πρὸς τὰ μὴ ἐπιχειρεῖν ἀπολέσας τὸν δίκαιον. The Ancient

Latin Version answers exactly to the *Greek Copy*; and all that can fairly be inferred from them is, that he did not desire to interest the *Populace* in his Favour in this particular Case, which could do no Good, and might do Harm. For let it be considered; if the People had never so strongly engaged on his Side, could they have reversed the Sentence and saved the *Martyr*? No, he had been sentenced to the wild Beasts by the *Emperor* himself, who was not now at *Rome*, but was absent on Occasion of the War with the *Parthians*; nor was there any Authority there, which could alter or mitigate the Punishment. All the Interest and Intercessions of his Friends, if they had been never so great, could have been of no Avail against the *Imperial Decree*, and therefore this *could not* have been the Meaning of the Saint in his Request. He could not desire them not to do any Thing, which he knew was *out of their Power* to do; but this was absolutely beyond their Power, for all the Interest in the *Court of Rome* could not have prevented the Execution of *Trajan's Sentence*, that he should be thrown to the wild Beasts. The only possible Method that remain'd of preserving him was by a *miraculous Interposition* in his Favour, that those Savage Creatures

Creatures might be restrained from their natural Fury, and, like *Daniel's Lions*, might refuse to devour the Saint. In such Case farther Application must have been made to the *Emperor* for his Pleasure, and he was a Man of that Character, whom such an Event might have awakened. Then the Good-will and Favour of the People might have been of some Service towards his Preservation *after* such a Miracle, but could be of no Use *before* it. Thus, I think, the Circumstances of the Case, the Contents of the Martyrs Epistle, and more especially the *Inconsistency* of any other Supposition, do all confirm the Interpretation given, and Inference drawn by my *Father*, that *Ignatius* did herein refer to the *miraculous Assistance* attainable by their *Prayers*, which he desired might not prevent his Martyrdom.

Thus the Arguments of both the forementioned Writers stand in their full Force for any Thing that he has said to invalidate them. The primitive Martyrs spoke and wrote, just as it must be supposed that they would have done, if *Miracles* were *commonly* worked among them ; and this was as much as could be expected, where Believers were discoursing with one another. But Dr. *M.* has him-

self in another Part of his Book (p. 124, 125.) introduced the Mention of one Miracle sufficient to overthrow his Opinion that they *all* ceased in the apostolical Times. He allows that it is related in "one of the most authentic and celebrated Pieces in all primitive Antiquity." The History referred to is that of the *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, as reported in the circular Letter of the Church of *Smyrna*. This was a Season, wherein the Mention of Miracles, if any such were wrought, might be *proper* even to those who were already *Christians*, for the Confirmation of their Faith, and the Improvement of their Practice; and here accordingly we find an express Recital of them. An audible Voice from Heaven encouraged him in his *first* Entrance on the Trial, and in the *final* Completion of it, the Fire supernaturally formed an Arch which preserved the Martyr from burning; insomuch that the Executioners were forced to change the Nature of the Punishment, and to dispatch him by a Dagger. The Attempt of accounting for this by a *Wind or something like it*, would end in as great a Miracle as any; and when offered in Opposition to a miraculous Interposition, is so ridiculously absurd, that it is difficult to return a serious Answer to it, or to suppose

suppose the Dr. serious in the Objection. But the principal Difficulty may possibly be thought to be that which is suggested in the marginal Note, (p. 126.) that " after a vain Profusion of Miracles on this and the like Occasions, yet their Martyrdom was always effected at last." Now if the *Preservation* of the *Martyrs* had professedly been the only Design, this Objection would have born some plausible Appearance ; but as the Intent of those Miracles is no where thus *confined*, they might have a very good and very important Use, though the Life of the Confessor was at length sacrificed. For were not the Admonition of *Heathens*, and the Encouragement of *true Believers*, Ends worthy such an Interposition ? Both these are expressly said to have been brought about by the Miracle wrought at St. *Polycarp's* Martyrdom. Besides, did not a miraculous Circumstance of a like Nature attend the first Apprehension of our blessed Lord himself, notwithstanding his Crucifixion was soon after accomplished ? Did not such a mighty Power go forth from his Presence as struck them to the Ground who came to seize him, though he presently resigned himself to them and to all the Violence that they intended him ? But shall we therefore dare to call that Miracle *vain* because

because it contributed not to his *Preservation*? It was not intended for that Purpose, but to work a good Effect on others; to shew them that they were acting against the Cause of God, and that Heaven could easily have over-ruled their wicked Actions, if other providential Designs were not to be brought about by the Permission of their Wickedness. In like Manner it is great Arrogance of Style, and Weakness of Argument, to call that *a vain Profusion of Miracles*, which distinguished the Martyrdom of some of the first Christians, merely because it did not prevent it. But it might, and often did, answer other good Purposes; it awakened the Attention of Friends and Enemies and prepared the one for Conviction and the other for Perseverance. It would be no less than Presumption in us to pronounce them *vain*, though we could not discern their Design, where there is Evidence of their being *really wrought*; but in these Instances there is no such Difficulty, for we can readily assign their important Use and beneficial Effect. And as to the Evidence of the Reality of the Miracle in View before us, this Author at least is convicted by his own Concessions; who acknowledges the *Genuineness* of the Letter from the Church of *Smyrna*, and one Part of the Account contained

tained in it, and yet rejects the other, which was as much a Matter of Fact, that fell under the Senses of the Spectators, and was as strongly attested by them.

Let us now sum up the foregoing Evidence. Here is one Miracle plainly and positively proved, as dignifying the Exit of the great Bishop of *Smyrna*. There is another plainly alluded to, as within the Reach of the Prayers of the Faithful, in the earnest Request of the zealous Bishop of *Antioch*, which is not capable of any other Sense. The *very Word* appropriated in the sacred Writings to signify the *Gift of Miracles*, is used in several of these apostolical Writers, and the *Context* is always as suitable, and generally more favourable, to this Sense of it than to any other. These may well be admitted as positive Proofs; and as to the *presumptive Argument* which Dr. M. has offered against them, it may very well be reversed in their Favour. He thinks that if the primitive Writers had had these miraculous Powers, they must have mentioned them more particularly. But may we not with at least as much Reason and Authority infer, that if these miraculous Powers had ceased with the Apostles, their Successors must have taken Notice of so extraordinary an Event, and have excited

their

their Disciples to Zeal and Piety with this Consideration, that they had now nothing to be distinguished by but their Graces, and good Works. As *Christ* had promised such extraordinary Gifts to his Disciples, without confining his Promise to the Persons or Times of the Apostles, and as we find them accordingly spoken of in one of St. Paul's Epistles, as plentifully bestowed on *common Believers*, and as the *Occasion* and even *Necessity* for them *continued* or rather *increased* under the Persecutions arising in the next Age, it was natural for the *immediate Successors* of the Apostles to expect the Continuance of the same extraordinary Gifts. If their Expectation was answered, and they were favoured with them, there might be no Occasion for the frequent Mention of those Gifts, which had continued from the first Publication of the Gospel. But if they had been disappointed, and had fallen short of this great Hope, could they have avoided taking Notice of this *material Difference* between themselves and their Predecessors, and not in some one Passage have reminded their Brethren and Followers, that they had only their Holiness and Virtue now to recommend them? When Miracles really ceased, we find Christian Writers thus acknowledging

ledging the Fact, and applying the Consideration; but there is no *Confession* of this Sort, nor any *Intimation* of it, in any of the apostolical Writers now spoken of. Their Silence on this Subject, if it were as total and uniform, as Dr. M. contends, might be urged strongly on our Side of the Question; for it is scarce credible, that they should no where take any Notice of so great and sudden an *Alteration* as must have happened, if the principal Leaders of the Christian Cause and Governors of the Church had all at once been deprived, in those Times of Adversity, of the Privileges and Succours, which common Converts enjoyed in the Generation immediately preceding. But the forecited Address of St. Ignatius to the Church of Smyrna most expressly excludes all Notion of such *Alteration*, for when he congratulates them, as being mercifully blessed with every extraordinary *Gift*, and repeats that they were not destitute of *any one such Gift*, he must mean to equal them in this Respect with their *Predecessors*, or he could not with Truth have used this emphatical Language.

Upon the Whole, I cannot think that this Author has established his Position, that "here we have an Interval of about half a Cen-

" tury, the earliest and purest of all Christian
 " Antiquity after the Days of the Apostles,
 " in which we find not the least Reference to
 " the standing Power of working Miracles, as
 " exerted openly in the Church, for the Con-
 " viction of Unbelievers ; " (p. 9.) That the
 Reference is not so full as afterwards, when they
 addressed to *Unbelievers*, is no *Wonder* ; but
 that there is not the least Reference, is no *Truth*.
 He seems himself aware of it, by adding, that
 " if it should appear probable to any, that
 " they were favoured in some Occasions with
 " extraordinary Illuminations, Visions, or di-
 " vine Impressions, yet that Gifts of this Sort
 " were merely personal, granted for their par-
 " ticular Comfort, and reaching no farther
 " than themselves." (p. 10.) he might as well
 say, that the *Gifts of Healings*, exercised by our
 Saviour and his Apostles, were *only* for the *per-*
sonal Comfort of those that were healed.
 Whereas all such Gifts answered a double
 End. They were *Acts of Mercy* to those who
 reaped the Benefit of them, and they were a
Demonstration to others of a *divine Authority*
 and *Interposition*. In like Manner, if the His-
 tory of the Predictions of St. Ignatius and St.
 Polycarp, as cited by *Archbishop Wake*, be *real*,
 then they might be both a *Support to them*, and

an *Evidence* to *others* of the Truth of what they taught ; for nothing can be a stronger Proof of divine Assistance than a Spirit of *Prophecy*.

The Testimonies of succeeding Writers for the Continuance of miraculous Powers in the Church he allows to be strong, explicit, and frequent ; and has given us a Collection of them from (p. 10. to 19.) The first Step taken to invalidate them is by repeating his former Observation, that “ the Silence of all “ the apostolic Writers on the Subject of these “ Gifts, must dispose us to conclude that in “ those Days they were actually withdrawn.” I think that it would much more strongly dispose us to draw the very contrary Conclusion, that they were *not withdrawn* : But it appears farther, that this *Silence* was not so *total* as he represents ; and as far as it is true, has been accounted for by the Consideration of the *Persons* to whom they wrote ; who were their own *Converts* and *Brethren*, who needed not so much to be *reminded* of the *Evidence* arising from these *Gifts*, and therefore the Conclusion will not hold good, that Miracles were then actually withdrawn, because they are not more insisted on. The farther Inference of the Unreasonableness of supposing a *Re-*

vival of them, after a Cessation of forty or fifty Years, (p. 19.) sinks of Course, since the Cessation itself depends merely on his own Imagination, and must be proved by better Arguments than any that he has yet advanced.

His remaining Observation under this Head deserves singular Notice, "The Difference," he says, "between the miraculous Gifts of the apostolic Days and those of the following Ages, not only in the Nature, but in the Manner of exerting them, will confirm the Suspicion of the latter." (p. 20.) The Reason given is, that "the latter were more open and free than the former in calling out upon the Magistrates and People to come and see the mighty Wonders, which they were ready to exhibit before their Eyes, on all Occasions, at any Warning, and in all Places whenever they thought fit." What a perverse Objector is this? Is it not strange to interpret an *Offer of publick Examination* to be an *Air of Imposture*? Had the Case been directly otherwise, how plausibly would this Gentleman have declaimed upon that Representation? If the Apostles had challenged all to see their Miracles, and the primitive Fathers had only spoken of some which had been done

done among themselves, and which they did not so much as offer to repeat; how would he have triumphed over the Difference of the Evidence? But this is surely the first Time that a *publick Offer* to all Enemies to look into the Foundation of their Pretensions, was ever construed as an Evidence that their Pretensions were groundless. It is the very Want of this publick Offer of Examination that makes us now reject the Pretensions of the Church of *Rome* in this Respect. Their pretended Miracles are only wrought among themselves, when they are not needed, and where a free Inquiry into them is not allowed; whereas they are not offered to reputed *Heresicks*, who might detect them, if false; or be converted by them, if real.—As to the Difference suggested between the Miracles of the Apostles, and those of succeeding Ages, it was not, as this Writer insinuates, that the former were *generally destitute* of this Power, and had it only by *sudden Impulses*, while the latter pretended to it *on all Occasions*; but they were *equal* in this Respect, and were *habitually* endued with it on all proper Occasions, though they could not exert it to serve any *different Purposes*, as I before observed. The true Ground of the Fact here referred to, I apprehend to be

be as follows. The Apostles *first wrought Miracles*, and *then argued satisfactorily from them*. Their Successors often found it more convincing to *lay Claim to divine Assistance*, and *then to work their Miracles in Confirmation of their Claim*. Either Method would be sufficient for the Satisfaction of a reasonable Inquirer, but certainly the latter was less liable to Evasion. The incontestable Miracles of Christ and his Apostles roused the Attention of all well disposed Minds, and convinced them upon this rational Principle, which one of them expressed, that *none could do those Things which they did unless God was with them*. Their Success in gaining Converts did of Course irritate their Adversaries, who were necessitated to find out some Method of evading that plain Argument; and therefore suggested, either that there was some *Fraud* in the Appearance of their supernatural Endowments, or that, if they were *real*, they proceeded only from the Assistance of *Demons*, to which their Enemies made Pretensions as well as themselves. This naturally produced more explicit Declarations from the Advocates of Christianity. What could they do more than appeal to the Evidence of the *Senses* of their Opposers for the *Reality* of their Miracles, and to their *Judgment* for the *Origin*

gin of them, by challenging them to come and be Witnesses of their supernatural Works, and to bring into Competition with them their own pretended Powers; and then judge, by the Event, on which Side the Hand of God would declare itself? The Nature of the Case would suggest this Method of Proceeding; his Account of their History confirms it; and the Result is not to the Disadvantage either of the Miracles of the Apostles, or of those of the succeeding Ages.

His second Head relates to the Persons, who were endued with these extraordinary Gifts. And the first Observation is, that "none of the Writers, whose Testimonies he has cited, have any where affirmed, that either they themselves, or the apostolic Fathers before them, were indued with any Power of working Miracles." (p. 22.) I wonder that he should forget that Testimony of *Irenæus* which he had cited (p. 11.) that "All who were truly Disciples of Jesus, wrought Miracles in his Name." Were not *Irenæus* himself, and the Rest of the primitive Writers before him, included in this Character? If he meant, that they have not said this of themselves exclusive of others, the Remark is true, but nothing to his Purpose, nay rather makes against

against him. They never claimed this as their sole Prerogative, but readily acknowledged, that common Christians, as well as their Bishops and Teachers, were indued with this Power of working Miracles, whenever Providence called them to an Opportunity of vindicating or propagating the Faith. For with this Limitation I presume, we must understand even the Universality of *Irenæus's* Expression, that all the Disciples of Jesus wrought Miracles "in his Name," not as meaning that every single Christian did actually work Miracles, but that all or any of them might be enabled for that Purpose, if there was a proper Call or Occasion for it; and such Call or Occasion was most likely to happen oftenest to the chief Governors and Teachers. But this Author's Design, professedly is, to shew, from the short Hints and Characters of the primitive Wonder-Workers, as given both by Friends and Enemies, that the celebrated Gifts of those Ages were generally engrossed and exercised by private Christians, chiefly of the Layety; who used to travel about from City to City, to assist the ordinary Pastors of the Church and Preachers of the Gospel in the Conversion of the Pagans, by the extraordinary Gifts with which they were supposed to be
flame indued

" induced by the Spirit of God, and the mira-
 " culous Works which they pretended to per-
 " form." (p. 24.) The only Evidence which
 he has produced under this Head to support
 this extraordinary Account is, that their gene-
 ral Style is " such and such Works are done
 " among us or by us, by our People; by a
 " few, by many, by our Exorcists, by igno-
 " rant Laymen, Women, Boys, and any sim-
 " ple Christian whatsoever." (p. 22.) Now
 (to omit some Exceptions which might be
 made to this Translation) there is a plain
 Reason to be given why their *general Style*
 should run thus; that is, why they should
 usually lay the Stress on the *meanest People* as
 working them, not as *excluding* their Superiors
 from the same Operations, but because the
 Mention of *these*, who were the *least capable*
 of Craft or Fraud, must be most convincing
 to the Gainsayers. For Instance, when *Ter-*
tullian challenged the Heathen Magistrates to
 try the Experiment by the Cure of any De-
 moniac, if he had offered himself to perform
 the Work, it might have been said that he in
 particular had learnt some *Art*, which they
 could not detect; but when he told them that
 it should be performed by *any Christian*

whatsoever, this was surely more clear and unexceptionable. Were we to run through all the Testimonies before cited by him from *Justin Martyr, Irenæus, &c.* we should find that they speak of the *whole Body of Christians*, great as well as small, as indued with these Gifts on any signal Occasion, but they infist particularly on the Performance of them by *those* who had the *least natural Endowments*, as the mighty Hand of God was most visible, when it displayed itself by the *meanest Instruments*. In all like Cases it is usual to specify *those Persons*, in whom the Force of the Argument will appear most to Advantage. I have often taken Notice, (as I doubt not but others have done) upon the Subject of the Usefulness and Excellency of the Christian Revelation, that by the Benefit of it even *our common People, our Women and Children*, know more of God and of their Duty towards him, than many of the wisest unenlightned Philosophers. Now would it be reasonable a thousand Years hence to infer from such an Observation, that *none but illiterate Persons*, none but those of the weakest Sex and tenderest Age, reaped any Light from the Revelation of the Gospel, because *they only are specified?*

specified? It would be just as reasonable as to infer from the Mention of them by the primitive Writers *as working Miracles*, that *they only* were enabled to do so. Whereas in both Cases the *Stress* is laid on them, because they of all others were *least able* to arrive at any Proficiency of themselves. *Tertullian*, and the other Assertors of the Continuance of miraculous Powers in the Church, were just before charged with *Confidence* and an *ostentatious* Manner of proclaiming their Powers, which he thought carried an Air of Quackery and rendered them liable to Suspicion, because they challenged the Heathens to come and look into them: Now because they are more *silent* on *their own* Performances, pass over them in Humility, and dwell on the mighty Deeds of their *meanest Brethren*, they are made liable to Suspicion on that very Account too; and every different Consideration is suggested to invalidate their Credit. So difficult is it to satisfy these warm Admirers of Truth, and sagacious Inquirers after it! The true Reason probably, why the primitive Fathers did not mention themselves particularly on this Head of miraculous Powers, was really to avoid any *Ostentation*, and to do the greater Honour to Christ.

tianity, by shewing, that its meanest Professors had the same, when they came to have any Contest with *Heathens*. His Scheme therefore of some of these of the Layety travelling about with the Pastor's to work Miracles for them, is an entire Fiction of his own, grounded on no Authority, and supported by no Reason.

Well, but if the *Christians* can no Way be brought to bear Witness against themselves, their *Enemies* must do it for them. “*Lucian*”, he says, and “*Celsus* and *Julian* and *Porphyry* “ always charged them with Fraud and Imposture in the Performance of their Miracles.” (p. 22, 23.) And must they not have been *self-condemned* if they had done otherwise? If they had acknowledged, that their supernatural Works were wrought by the Assistance of God, they must in Consequence have received their Doctrines; and therefore, if they were sincere *Heathens*, they must really have disbelieved their Miracles. But what was *consistent* in them, and suitable to Persons of their Notions and Characters, bears a most unaccountable Appearance when cited, with Apprehension by a wise Man and a professed Christian. For was ever the Charge of Imposture

posture by *Enemies* thought to prove the *Reality* of an *Imposture*? And did not these very *Enemies* charge as much on the *Miracles* of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*, which are admitted to be *genuine* by this *Author*? I am unwilling to press the *Consequence* farther, and shall only observe, that the open *Claim* and *Challenges* in the primitive *Writers*, are sufficient to disprove that *Calumny* of their *Adversaries*, that their *Miracles* *shunned the Light*, and were done only in *private*; and farther, that their *Adversaries* themselves did not think fit to trust their *Cause* on this *Point*, for though they sometimes threw in some such *Hints* as these, yet at other other *Times* they shifted the *Objection*, and chose rather to suppose that their *Miracles* were wrought by the *Assistance* of *Demons*. Now this *Solution* was a strong *Confirmation* of the *Truth* of the *Facts*, a *Testimony* from an *Enemy* of the *Reality* of those *supernatural Works*, which were so evidently above the *Power* of *human Agency*, that they were forced to take to this *Method* of evading them.

His Remark (*p. 24.*) on the *Difference* of the *Divine Dispensations* as represented in the *New Testament*, and as set forth in the *Writings* of the *primitive Fathers*, is entirely founded

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on his own Mistake. It is not true, that in the former Days, that is, in those of the new Testament, "the Power of Miracles was committed to none but the Apostles and a few of the most eminent of the other Disciples." It appears by the Epistles of St. Paul that they were frequent among common Converts. Neither is it true, that "in the following Ages we find the Administration of them committed, not to the Successors of the Apostles, to the Bishops, the Martyrs, or the principal Champions of the Christian Cause, but to Boys, to Women, and above all to private and obscure Laymen, not only of an inferior, but something also of a bad Character." There is no such Representation in the primitive Writers of the Power of Miracles being given to the meanest, exclusive of their Superiors and Governors, but the Meanest are generally mentioned as giving the greatest Force to the Argument. As to his Observation of the Administration of Miracles being sometimes committed to those of a *bad Character*, which he cites from St. Chrysostom, the Words which he has thus rendered in the worst Sense, are strictly no more than that "God sometimes thought fit to work these Miracles by those who were unworthy of them."

them." Νοι δεναι διλαγίων επενδύο Θεος
εώθε. Might not this possibly be a very *humiliating*
Expression, and such as might properly
have come from the Mouth of the Apostles,
even if spoken of themselves? Or if the Con-
nection of St. Chrysostom's Discourse be thought
to confine his Meaning to *Unworthiness* in a
stricter Sense, if he spoke of those who were
less, or even the least deserving among
the Christian Brethren, how will Dr. M.
disprove this, or what Inference can he
draw from it to the Advantage of his
Argument? I would be far from presuming
to say that God Almighty would not work
a Miracle by an *unworthy Christian*, who was
more zealous for his Faith than careful of
his Practice, if a proper Opportunity should
offer of his converting an Heathen; since in
such supposed Case the Miracle would confirm
nothing but the *real Truth*, but could by no
Means be brought to justify the unsuitable Be-
haviour of the Missionary: Nay it might be
useful as an awakening Admonition to himself,
and might contribute to work his *Reformation*
as well as the others *Conviction*. However, as
to the *Fact*, that miraculous Powers were
sometimes granted to those, who even in this
Sense were *unworthy*, we have express Assu-
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rance from our blessed Saviour's Declaration, that at the last Day some shall plead the Privilege of these Gifts, who shall not be able to plead a good Life, and for Want of that shall finally be rejected. *Matt. vii. 22, 23.* Miraculous Powers do not imply *Impeccability* in the Persons on whom they are conferred, nor nor *Infallibility* in any other Points than those, in Defence of which they are professedly exerted. Dr. M's. Connection of *Religious Adoration* to be paid to the *Instruments*, by which a Miracle is wrought, may be serviceable to the Cause of Papery; but is a Concession in which I should think he will not be joined by any rational Protestant. His Attempt, under the third Head, is to invalidate the *Credibility* of those Fathers, whose Writings bear Witness to the Continuance of miraculous Powers in the primitive Church. And the Charge, which he advances against them, is Want of *Veracity*, or of *Judgment*, or of both. "The apostolic Fathers, as bearing no direct Testimony to the present Question, he is willing to let pass as Men of great Piety, Integrity, and Simplicity," but those who are more positive to the Point in Dispute, are to appear under a different Character.

Justin

Justin Martyr is the first that falls under his Censure. He has been so full in his Testimony concerning the frequent Exercise of miraculous Powers, that if his Credit be not blotted, this Author's Opinion cannot be supported. His Character therefore is attacked from his *Pretence to Inspiration*, and from the weak *Expositions* of Scripture, which he has in some Places given, which yet he is said to ascribe to *Revelation*. (p. 27, &c.) This is so capital a Charge, that the Author seemed sensible, that much of the Support of his Cause depends upon it, and has repeated it not less than four Times, (Pref. p. 24, 25; Book p. 27, 117, 188.) Let us examine then, whether *Justin Martyr* has made any such Claim as he is here represented to have done, and has falsified in any such Manner as to forfeit his Credit. Dr. M. says (p. 27.) "We have seen above that among the many Indowments conferred in an extraordinary Manner on the primitive Christians, the Gift of expounding the Holy Scriptures, or the Mysteries of God, was one." Now in all the Passages that he has cited before, I do not find any such Claim of an extraordinary Power of expounding the Holy Scriptures. *Irenæus* indeed speaks of "expounding the Mysteries of God," but says

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not one Word of the *Holy Scriptures*. And certainly a Man might have a Knowledge of the Christian Mysteries supernaturally infused into him, or a happy Talent of explaining them particularly communicated to him, without an Infallibility of interpreting all the Passages of the Old Testament. Indeed this Gift of expounding the former *Scriptures* is even in the New Testament spoken of less clearly and distinctly, than any other supernatural Endowment; but is generally understood by Interpreters to mean an *inspired Knowledge* of the true Sense of a particular Passage of the *Prophecy*; for confirming or explaining some particular Doctrine of the *Gospel*. This Gift seems to have been *occasional only*, owing, as he has described them all, to sudden Impulses; intended for the Use of *Believers* not of *Heathens*: (1 Cor. xiv. 22) and ceasing very early in the Church, as the Necessity of it did after the very first Exigency. Well, but *Justin Martyr*, we are told, expressly claimed this Privilege, and these are given as his very Words, “that
“the Gift of expounding the *Holy Scriptures*
“was granted by the special Grace of God to
“himself” (p. 27.) I will set down the whole Passage, and leave any one to judge whether there be the *Appearance* of any such Meaning.

The holy *Martyr* had just quoted that *Text of Scripture*, wherein our Saviour himself says, " All Things are delivered to me of my Father, and no Man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him, (*Mat. xi. 27.*) He has therefore revealed unto us," (says he in the Sentence cited by Dr. M.) " all those Things, which we, by his Grace have learned from the Holy Scriptures, knowing him to be the First Begotten of God, and to have existed before all Creatures, &c." Απεκαλυψεν δι μην πάντα ὅσα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν διὰ τῆς χάριτος νεότητας, γνόντες αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον μὲν τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων, &c. (*Dial. Par. 2. p. 295. Ed. Jebb.*) These are literally the Words from whence this Author would persuade us, that *Justin* claimed the particular Gift of *expounding the Holy Scriptures*, as granted by the *special Grace* of God to himself; whereas he is neither speaking of *himself* in particular, nor of any *special Grace* but of the happy Knowledge, which *all Christians* were blessed with by the *Revelation* of the *Gospel*. But to confirm this Interpretation, Dr. M. cites two other Passages, which look (and do but look) something more than

Way. The first of these he has only referred to, but I shall translate it at large. “ I will endeavour to explain to you the Scriptures, without labouring to shew merely any artificial Ornament of Language; for I have no Talent of that Sort, but Grace only is given to me of God to understand the Scriptures; of which Grace I will pray that all may be freely and fully Partakers, that I may not for this be liable to Judgment in that Dispensation of it which God the Creator of all Things will exercise by my Lord Jesus Christ.” Γραφὰς ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς ορεῖν μέλλω, εἰ κατασκευὴν λόγου ἐν μόνῃ τέκηρ ἐπιδείχνειν διαιτήσας σπένδω. οὐδὲ γάρ δύναμις ἔμοι τοιαύτη τὸς εἶ-το, ἀλλὰ χάρις παρὰ Θεοῦ μόνη ἐις τὰ συνιεναι τὰς γραφὰς αὐτῷ ἐδόθη μοι ἵνα χάριτος καὶ τάγτας ποιῶντος ἀμιθωτὴ καὶ ἀφθόνως παρακαλεῖ γίνεσθαι, ὅπως μὴ καὶ τότε χάριν πρίσιν ὀφελίσω, εἰ διπέρ μέλλει πρίσει διὰ τὸ Κυρίου μη Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν ὄλων Θεοῖς ποιεῖται. (*Dial. Par.* I. p. 172, 173.) He was not certainly obliged to pray that All might be *inspired*, if he had spoken of his own Proficiency in the Scriptures in that Sense; but he thought himself bound to pray that All might be favoured with the Knowledge of those sacred Writings; and that the Jews in particular, with whom he was discoursing, who

who admitted the Authority of the Old Testament, might through Grace so far understand the true Sense of it, as to discern the Predictions of an universal Redeemer, and the Completion of them in the Person and Offices of Christ. This is the Point that he labours throughout the whole Conference, wishes them the Grace and Favour that himself had received in the Discovery of a Saviour; and intimates that he thought that he should sin against the Lord, if he should cease to pray for them.—The other Citation from *Justin* alledged to the same Purpose, is as follows. The Martyr himself had cited a Passage from *Isaiah*, which his Jewish Companions allowed to be of Weight, upon which he replies, “ Can you ever think that we could “ understand these Things in the Scriptures, “ if we had not received the Grace to under-“ stand them from the Author of them ? ”

Οἰεσθε ἀν τῆς πότε, ὡς ἄνδρες, γενοπέντε διηγηθῆναι ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς ταῦτα, εἰ μὴ θεληματι τῷ θελήσαστος ἀντα ἐλάβομεν χάριν τῆς γονού.

Dial. Par. II. p. 234. The Jews acknowledged the ordinary Grace and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore this Answer was very proper and pertinent to them; nor was it any thing more than an Expression, which every good Christian would have used

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on the Occasion, without any Thought of laying Claim to any *extraordinary* Endowment. The Word *χάρις* here used was not the Term by which a *supernatural* Gift was described, but was known to mean that ordinary Co-operation of the Holy Spirit with our best Endeavours, which is common to all Believers. All Persons of true Piety accustom themselves to speak of every Kind and Degree of their Proficiency as owing to *the Grace of God*, according to the plain Doctrine of Scripture, without ever intending to claim particular Directions or Inspirations for that Purpose. Indeed as this Assistance of the blessed Spirit is a Power added to the Strength of Nature, it may in some Sense be called *supernatural*; and it is a Proof of the Wisdom and Caution of the primitive Writers, that there is no more Confusion on such a Subject; but that they have so well distinguished and preserved the Distinction between *τὴν χάριν* and *τὰ χαρισματα*, the ordinary Grace and the extraordinary Endowments of the Spirit. Might not this Author more plausibly have insisted on the Pretensions of our Church to supernatural Assistance from that Petition in our Liturgy, that
 " by the Divine Inspiration we may think
 " those Things that be Good, and by his merciful Guiding may perform the same," than
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from *Justin Martyr's* pious and humble Acknowledgment of the Assistance of God's Grace in any Progress that he had made in the Discovery or Establishment of Truth?

Since therefore this primitive Writer, as far as appears, makes no such Claim to any particular Inspiration in the Interpretation of Scripture, all those triumphant Arguments, and all those severe Censures, which are built on it, fall of Course, and will turn out to the Disadvantage of the Dr. who so pompously urges them. It will be a Caution to his Readers not to give *implicit* Credit to him any more than to those *venerable* Writers whom he insults, but to examine both with Care and Impartiality. His own Supposition indeed and Account of the Miracles which he allows to be real, that they were imparted only at the Moment of their Exertion, and notted by some special Impulse to the Agent, might have saved the *Martyr's* Credit, if he had really made such Claim. For he might have been inspired with the Sense of one particular Passage for the present Conviction of a Jew, and yet have been left merely to his own Reasonings upon others, and those Mentions of his Knowledge by Grace are introduced lastly very rational Applications of Scripture.

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And now, should we admit all the false Opinions and weak Reasonings, which he has collected and charged upon this Father, I do not see how they would affect his Credit as a Witness of Matter of Fact; which is the Case of his Testimony to the Continuance of miraculous Powers in the Church. Though some of his Doctrines might be *erroneous*, and some of his Arguments *inconclusive*, yet if he was a *good Man* that would not *deceive others*, and had common Sense enough to judge of those Things which came under the Evidence of his Senses, which is sufficient Security against being *deceived himself*; then there is no Reason to except to his Evidence. Dr. M. has, I think, in the forementioned Instance of *Justin's Claim to Inspiration*, fallen into a gross Mistake, which I should have thought a Man of plain common Understanding had been in little Danger of falling into; but though this lessens my Opinion of his *Judgment*, yet it would not in the least incline me to call in Question his *Veracity* in a Fact which he should affirm of his own certain Knowledge. If therefore *Justin* has sometimes offered some improper Illustrations, foreign Emblems, wrong Etymologies, and ill-grounded Traditions; if he has ascribed greater

greater Authority to the *Sybilline Oracles*, the Septuagint Version, the Apochryphal Writings, and some spurious Books, than either of them deserved ; yet all these supposed Errors in *Judgment* cannot convince me, that he had neither Eyes, nor Ears, nor any Share of Understanding ; or that he could be so senseless as to appeal to the Publick for the Reality of Miracles every Day wrought among them, if they had not been genuine and visible to all. I wonder how this Gentleman can think Christianity could have maintained its Ground at all, if its best Apologists had fixed it on such a Foundation, as it would have been in the Power of every one to have disproved.

But the two Points, in which he most triumphs over *Justin*, are in his supposed Mistakes concerning the Cells of the *LXX Translators* of the Old Testament, and his Charge of the *Romans* with the Worship of *Simon Magus*, which this Author calls *plain and obvious Facts*, (p. 41.) and infers, that one, who was capable of being deceived in them, could be no competent Judge of other Matters. As to his calling the former “ a filly “ Story”, (p. 37.) there was too much Authority for it to treat it with such Contempt. It was currently believed in *Justin’s Time*, and if he saw such Ruins at *Alexandria*, as bore

the Appearance of the Remains of such Cells, and it was confirmed to him by the Inhabitants of the Place upon ancient Tradition, that they were those very Remains, tho' it be supposed at last to be a Mistake, yet I cannot see any Thing in the Account to invalidate in the least the Character of our *Martyr*. His Mistake, (if it was his) in saying that *Ptolemy* sent the Message to *Herod* instead of *Eleazar*, was apparently no more than a Slip of the Memory, or possibly of the Pen, for I believe All who write much, have upon a Review found Mistakes in Names in Points of History, which notwithstanding they are very well acquainted with. Dr. M.'s shrewd Observation, that "Herod happened to live about 300 Years later than Ptolemy," would have proved to Demonstration to a candid Inquirer, that *Justin* could not mean *Herod the Great*, and much less any of his Successors of that Name. He had had so much Occasion to enquire into that Story, that it might be presumed impossible that he should be so much out in his Chronology; but the very first Conjecture would have been, that there was some Mistake in the Name. But most probably this Error was not the Authors but the Transcribers; and whether done by Design, thro' Ignorance as Dr. Grabe conjectures, or by Accident thro' Inadvertency,

virility, as it might happen to any Scribe, is not material to determine.

The other supposed Error which Dr. M. triumphs over, relates to the Charge of worshipping *Simon Magus*, which, he says, " was beyond all reasonable Doubt a gross Blunder of *Justin*. The Statue and Inscription," he adds, " to which *Justin* appeals, were not dedicated to his Countryman *Simon Magus*, — but to a *Sabine Deity*, of ancient Worship in *Rome*, and of similar Name *Semoni Sancus*, as the Inscription itself dug up about two Centuries ago, has clearly demonstrated." (p. 40.) Yet others perhaps may require more Proof upon this Head than a bare Assertion. *Justin Martyr*, when he wrote this Apology, was himself at *Rome*, where there were so many Christians, who could have informed him better, if he had himself made the Mistake, that it is not credible that he should have persisted in it. There are so many Letters in the supposed Inscription, different, that if he could but read he could not well mistake; and there were so many other Inscriptions to *Semo Sancus* in *Italy*, that there was still less Probability of it. Nay the Inscription, on the Statue mentioned to be dug up, expressly says, that it was erect-

ed at the Charge of *Sextus Pompeius*. Now this *Sextus Pompeius* happened (as the Dr. expresses it) to live before *Simon Magus*, which must prevent almost a Possibility of *Justin's* imagining, that the Statue, which he had erected, was intended to the Honour of *Simon Magus*. *Justin* presented this Apology to the Emperor and Senate, wherein he had great Occasion to use all possible Care, and an Error of this Kind could not but have been of great Difservice to his Cause. It would have been detected and exploded as soon as mentioned, and must have sunk with its original Author. Whereas we find the same Charge of worshipping *Simon Magus* continued by many of the Primitive Fathers, and by *St. Austin* in particular; who elsewhere mentions this *Semo Sancus* as the God of the *Satines*, and was therefore less likely to confound them.—But after all — suppose that *this* was a Mistake; the Fact will only then be, that there was a Statue, to which Adoration was paid, which by the Similitude of Names, and “ by a preconceived Belief of “ certain fabulous Stories, which passed cur-“ rent about this *Simon* among the first Chri-“ stians,” (p. 40.) he mistook for another Per-son; will there follow from hence any Im-peachment

peachment of his *Veracity*? Will it follow from hence, that he is not to be trusted in Matters which he could not but know; which he speaks of as being every Day a Witness to; which he insists on that others might be as frequently and fully satisfied of, and which he challenges his Adversaries to disprove?

Indeed Dr. M. could not have fallen upon a more unfortunate Instance for the Charge of Superstition and Folly than *Justin Martyr*. He had been a professed *Philosopher*, had examined and gone through the several Sects of Philosophy, and had acquiesced in the most *rational* of them all, till he met with still better Instruction in the Institution of *Christianity*. He cannot be accused of Obstinacy or early Prejudices; he had given up all to the Conviction of *Reason*, and followed that faithfully till it led him to the Profession of the *Gospel*. He has given a very rational Account of his own Conversion in one of his Apologies; and if such a Person, who gave up all former Prepossessions, and all future Prospects in this World, to profess a Religion that cost him his Life, and which forbids all Falshood under Pain of Damnation, if such a Person, I say, is not to be *credited* in an Affair of which he must know the Truth or,

Falshood,

Falshood; then there can be no Credit beyond what we see and experience ourselves; but there is an End of all the Faith of History.

Irenaeus falls next under Censure, though scarce any Thing more is laid to his Charge than a Collection of *false Opinions*, which, if all admitted, are nothing to the Purpose as to the Point in Question concerning his Attestation of *miraculous Facts*. If he received and propagated some Mistakes by Tradition, if he allegorized some *literal* Parts of the Old Testament, according to the Custom of the Age in which he lived, which was intended by Way of *Illustration* and *Admonition* rather than *strict Proof*; or if on the other Hand he interpreted literally some *figurative* Parts or even Expressions of Scripture, (which seems to have given Occasion to wrong Explanations of the Doctrine of the Millennium, to the Opinion of the Cohabitation of *Angels* with *Women*, and some others) yet how is his Character affected as a *Witness* in Things which came within his own Knowledge? If no one's Testimony be to be admitted, till his Judgment be proved to be *infallible*, we must give up all Inquiries into past Transactions, and seek our Way thro' the World as well as we can. But it is said, "Whoever forged the rest of the spurious Traditions,
Boornis
" yet

" yet that which relates to the *Old Age of Jesus*, the most solemnly attested of them all, and peculiar to *Irenæus*, may be fairly presumed to be his own Forgery; because it was never embraced by any Body else." (p. 59.) Now in the first Place the Charge of his teaching the *Old Age of Jesus* is not a fair Representation. *Irenæus's Words* are no more than that "from the 40th and 50th Year Life declines towards the elderly State in which our Lord taught." *A quadragesimo autem & quinquagesimo anno declinat jam in etatem seniorem, quam habens Dominus noster docebat,* (Lib. II. C. 39.) All that can strictly be inferred from hence is, that *Irenæus* thought that our Lord was turned of 40, or between 40 and 50, which is much improved by Dr. M. who charges it as an Affirmation "that our Saviour lived to an old Age, or was 50 Years old at the least," (p. 45.) He had sunk in his Citation the former Part of the Words, that from the 40th Year Life declined, and mentions only the 50th that he might make the most of the Objection. But that we ought rather to adhere to the former Part of that Sentence, and interpret this Father's Judgment of the Age of Christ by *that*, is probable from the Method in which it is introduced.

introduced. It was in Opposition to those, who thought that our Saviour compleated no more than thirty Years, which *Irenæus*, in the Sentence preceding, calls the *Age of youth*. *In Disposition*, till it reaches to 40. But from 28 and afterwards it advances to a maturer Age, which was that of our Saviour.—Yes, but he says that the *Gospel* and *all the Ancients* taught this, which Dr. M. says “is as certainly false as the Gospels are true”, (p. 46.) But the very Mention of the *Gospel*, and the determinate Age here spoken of, pretty clearly point out from whence he, or those from whom he received it, were led into this Error. The Objection of the *Jews* to our Saviour, (*John viii. 57.*) that he was not yet 50 Years old, would easily lead Men to suppose, that he was between 40 and 50 at that Time, and the History of his After-Transactions might possibly incline them to believe, that he did live to compleat that Age; and I make no Doubt but that many, who have heard the Gospels read in Publick, and have not particularly examined them, have formed the same Conclusion. As to the Tradition *Irenæus* does not assert it to be so unanimous as Dr. M. represents him to do. He only lays, that all, that had met with St. John in *Aia*, testified that this was

was his Doctrine; and that some said they had heard the same from other of the Apostles;
Omnis seniores testantur, qui in Asia apud Joannem Discipulum Domini convenerunt id ipsum tradidisse eis Joannem.—*Quidam autem eorum non solum Joannem sed et alios Apostolos videntur & hæc eadem ap ipmis audierunt, & testantur de ejusmodi Relatione, (ibid.)* These All probably might mean no more, than *All that he had heard speak of it*, which might be Papias and a few of his Followers, who might easily, as well as some others, misunderstand the Expositions of the forecited Text. But after all, if the Testimony cited was never so unanimous, it may be cleared I think of any *Falshood* or even *Mistake*, unless we stretch *Irenæus's* Words on Purpose to support the Charge. He says, those, who had seen others of the Apostles as well as St. John, heard these same Things from them. *These same Things may, nay must allude to the Substance of his whole Discourse*, which was to prove that our Saviour's Ministry continued above one Year against some, who had so confined it: And he might well lay claim to Apostolical Tradition in Confirmation of this general Truth. There was no Occasion therefore for Dr. Whiby's Astonishment or Dr. M's Exultation upon

it in this triumphant Citation from him, " Be-
 " hold here, according to *Irenæus*, how all the
 " Elders of *Asia* testify with one Voice, that
 " they had received from St. *John* and the
 " other Apostles, a Tradition concerning a
 " Fact manifestly false ! Behold an Apostolic
 " Man, professing to prove from St. *John's*
 " Gospel, Things not only contradictory to
 " that Gospel but to the Articles of our
 " Creed." (p. 46.) But had they observed
 that this Reference to Tradition occurs in the
 Conclusion of the Chapter, after he had
 finished his Arguments on this Point, and that
 it is expressed in the *Plural Number*, as if
 Care had been taken that it might not be un-
 derstood of the *single Point* of our Lord's be-
 ing between 40 and 50, but of the several
 Circumstances of his Ministry, which proved
 it to be of longer Continuance than some had
 represented ; when it is said at the End of
 all, that *these same Things* were confirmed by
 the Authority of the other Apostles, this may
 fairly be understood of the *general Heads* of
 the Discourse, and with Respect to *Them*,
 such Tradition may be justified, and will nei-
 ther contradict the Gospel nor the Articles of
 our Creed.—But Dr. *M.* who seldom finds
 an Error in these primitive Writers but he
 improves

improves it for them, adds that *Irenæus* attempts "to prove from the Reason of the Thing, that as *Christ* came to save all Men, so it was necessary that he should pass through all the several Stages of Life, that he might be a Pattern to them All." (p. 45.) But there is not a Word of this *Necessity* in *Irenæus*. Upon Supposition of the *Fact* indeed he illustrates this *Use* of it, but does not argue, as here represented, that it was antecedently requisite that it should be so. Nay, as if with a premeditated Caution, he avoids any Mention of *Old Age*, uses only a Term of the comparative *Degree* to express a *maturer Age* than that of *Youth*, and goes no farther in his Representation. The same Term again he uses in speaking of the Age of *Christ* that *seniorem Ætatem habens docebat*, meaning that he was passed the youthful Stage of Life, and was arrived at a *more advanced Age*, when he exercised his Ministry, than those admitted, against whom he was arguing.—After all, if he must be understood to mean that our Saviour was at least between 40 and 50 (which is as much as his Words can be forced to mean) and that all that he heard of attested this, then I say such a Mistake might very easily happen, and being seemingly confirmed

by the Sound of the Text forecited, might easily pass in *Oral Tradition* without being contradicted, till *Irenæus's* publick Mention of it; (and all this without any Forgery) and this very Mention of it by him might give Occasion to canvass the Question, explode this Notion, and settle the Truth. Dr. M. observes (p. 59,) that "this Opinion was never embraced by any Body else," from whence I would observe contrary to his Suggestion (p. 55,) that the Primitive Writers did not implicitly follow one another; but were capable of discerning and desirous of avoiding Mistakes: And this is a Confirmation of their Testimony where they do follow each other, as in the forementioned Charge of the Worship of *Simon Magus*.

He says "he has been the fuller in opening the Characters and Opinions of *Justin* and *Irenæus*, that he might save himself the Trouble of enlarging in the same Manner on the Rest." (p. 54:) But if he has no more to say of the Rest than he has made good against them, I cannot think that their Credit will suffer much among any, who will give themselves the Trouble to look into their Characters. Nay I flatter myself that this Controversy will turn out for their Honour.

For

For as he has collected the weakest Parts of their Writings on Purpose to expose them, those, who on no better Motive than Curiosity, are drawn in to read them, will probably be surprized, after such a Representation, to find many solid Reasonings, correct Compositions, Cautions against Credulity, strong Proofs of Disinterestedness and Contempt of the World, and the whole enlivened with a Spirit of Piety which the Reader cannot but feel in a different Manner than in the Perusal of After-Writings: And upon the Whole will be little inclined to think a few Mistakes in Opinion can give any just Cause to suspect their *Vera-city*, when their Lives and Deaths were devoted to the Cause of Truth.

There is nothing more offered under this third Head, which I think affects the present Question. There is a loose Declamation about Tradition from p. 58. to 66. from thence to p. 71. there is an Attempt made upon the Faith of all History by shewing that those, who could believe Witches and Conjurers, are not worthy to be believed themselves in any Thing: But I cannot think that these Insinuations deserve formal Answers.

He "proceeds" (p. 72.) to his fourth general Head, namely; "to take a Review of

" all

in all the several Gifts or miraculous Powers, which were actually claimed, or pretended to have been possessed by the primitive Church." And the first that he instances in is that of *raising the Dead*, which *Irenæus* says was frequently performed *on necessary Occasions*. There is great Stress to be laid on this Cause. Dr. M. before the Page is finished, represents it, as if *Irenæus* had affirmed, that it was frequent in every Parish or Place where there was a Christian Church; and then expresses his Astonishment, that there should be scarce an Instance of it upon Record in the three first Centuries. Now the supposed Frequency of this Miracle might have been the very Reason why particular Instances might not be recorded, since all were equally extraordinary and had no distinguishing Circumstances. But as *Irenæus* limits this Miracle to *necessary Occasions*, the Frequency spoken of could be only comparative; and it is very possible, that they might not make such a Noise in the World as to be celebrated by all the Historians of those Times.—Besides, who should be expected to record these Instances? *Heathen Historians* would not if they had known and believed them, for it would have been an Act of Self-Condemnation in them; neither

neither would *Christian* Historians, (if such there had then been) for this would have been drawing down unnecessarily Persecution upon those particular Persons, when the general Assertion would serve the Purpose of their Argument as well.—But when *Irenæus* himself accounts for it, why Miracles of this Sort made no greater Noise in the World, and especially by the *Heathen* Historians, and why they had no greater Effect, namely, that the Pagans were prepossessed with a Notion of the *Impossibility* of the Thing in itself, so perverse again is this Objector, that he makes this Opinion of the Heathens an Argument against the Reality of this Miracle among the Christians. “A sure Proof,” says he, “that they had never seen or known it to be done unless in such a Manner as carried with it a strong Suspicion of Fraud or Collusion.” (p. 73.) Whereas this Prepossession was the very Thing which prevented their attending to or looking into them at all; for they could not think that they needed particular Circumstances to disprove that which they thought *impossible* in itself.

His next Objection is more plausible, and is indeed the most to his Purpose of any in his whole Performance. He says “*Theophilus* Bishop of *Antioch* in the second

"nd Century being challenged by *Autolycus*,
 "as an eminent Heathen, to shew him but
 "one Person who had been raised from the
 "Dead, on the Condition of turning Chris-
 "tian himself upon it, was not able to un-
 "dertake it," (p. 73.) I would observe then
 that this Account being drawn from the Writ-
 ings of *Theophilus* himself, nothing can be a
 stronger Proof of the Openness and Sincerity
 of these primitive Writers than the Insertion
 of such a Piece of History. It shews that
 they did not disguise or conceal any Thing,
 which might be turned to their Disadvantage,
 or pretend to more than they were able to per-
 form. It confirms the Pretensions, which the
 same *Theophilus* did make, and particularly
 where he speaks of the Dispossession of De-
 mons by common Christians, and of their
 Confessions of their own State and Nature.—
 I would observe farther, that according to this
 Author's own Account of the ancient Miracles
 that "they were imparted only at the Mo-
 "ment of their Exertion, which by some spe-
 cial Impulse was notified at the same Time
 "to the Agent," (Pref. p. 23.) there would be
 little Difficulty in this Case. It would only fol-
 low that *Theophilus* felt no such special Im-
 pulse to work this Miracle for the Satisfaction
 of
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of *Autolycus*; and why this was not communicated to him for the Benefit of that particular Person, is entring into the Councils of Providence, who might have good Reasons for not vouchsafing this Method of Conviction to him. We might as well ask, why Christ did not descend from the Cross for the Conviction of the Spectators, who declared they would believe on him if he did; after they had withstood the Evidence of Miracles and Prophecies. The same Consideration may greatly contribute to clean up the supposed Difficulty in this Case, according to the *Faith of Miracles* as before described as being a *rational Faith*, or a proper Judgment of the Suitableness of the Occasion to undertake the Working of a Miracle, in Consequence of the general Promise of supernatural Assistance. After the other Evidence that had been offered to *Autolycus*, it might not be judged proper to offer a Miracle for his Conviction; and there are some Circumstances in the Account, which clearly enough suggest this to be the Case. I do not think that either Dr. M. or my Father (whom he quotes on this Occasion) have taken the Case rightly. They both represent it, as if *Autolycus* had called on *Theophilus* to shew him but one Person that had been raised

from the dead, (that is, had been formerly raised) and that *Theophilus* discovers by his Answer, that he was not able to give him that Satisfaction: And then my Father goes on to shew, that by the Distance of Time all those, whom *Irenæus* had spoken of before, might probably be now dead the second Time. But this was really not the Sense of *Autolycus's* Demand. We may be sure from his Character and Method of objecting, that it would have been no Satisfaction to him, only to have been shewn a Person, and to have been told that he was formerly raised from the Dead; he would have distrusted the Account, and might as well have believed upon their general Claim of Miracles, as upon a Report to which he was not Witness himself. His plain Meaning was to desire, that he might be made an Eye-Witness to such an extraordinary Event; and *Theophilus* answers clearly to this Sense of his Demand. The whole Passage runs thus: "Farther, you deny the Resurrection of the Dead: For you say, shew me even one raised from the Dead, on the Sight of which I will believe. But in the first Place, what great Thing is it, if you do believe what you see yourself? Farther, if

holier need bid and call I do not call" you
most

" you can believe, that *Hercules*, that burned
 " himself, does still live ; and that *Esculapius*,
 " that was killed with Lightning, was raised
 " again : Can you disbelieve the Things which
 " are reported to you by God Himself ? In
 " like Manner if I should shew you One raised
 " from the Dead, and still living, even this
 " you would disbelieve ;" and then goes on
 to shew, that God had even in the Works of
 Nature and Providence, given sufficient Evi-
 dence of the *Possibility* and even *Probability* of
 a Resurrection. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀρεῖδαι σε
 νεκρούς ἔγειρεδαι φῆτε γάρ, δῆξόν μοι καὶ οὐτα
 ἔγειρθέντα ἐκ νεκρῶν θάμων πιστεύον. Πρώτου
 μὲν, τί μέγα, ὃς Θεασάμενος τὸ γεγονός πιστεύ-
 σεις; Εἶτα πιστεύεις μὲν Ἡρακλέα καίσαντα
 ἑαυτὸς, ξῆν καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸν κεραυνωθέντα
 ἔγγειρεδαι τὰ δὲ ὑπὸ τῷ Θεῷ σοι λεγόμενα ἀπίε-
 τεις; ἵσως καὶ ἐπιδείξω σοι νεκρὸν ἔγειρθέντα
 καὶ ζῶντα, καὶ τόπο τῶντο αἴσιοντος. ὁ μὲν γν
 Θεός σοι πολλὰ τεκμήρεα ἐνδείκνυσιν εἰς τὸ πι-
 γεύειν αὐτῷ, &c. (Theophr. Antioch. ad
 Autol. Lib. I. p. 34. Ed. Ox.) This is the
 whole Passage, and I think it is plain that it is
 misrepresented by Dr. M. in several Points.
 In the first Place *Autolycus* did not offer to
 turn *Christian*, if he could see one that had
 been raised from the Dead. He was speaking
 only

only of that one Point of the Resurrection, which at present he denied, but owned he would believe, if he could see an Instance of it. *Theophilus* answers, that this would not properly be *Belief*; whereas if the other had engaged to receive the *Christian Faith* on the Sight of such a Miracle, this Answer would not have been *pertinent*. From the same Reply it is evident, that *Autolycus* insisted on seeing the Person actually raised *in his Presence*, (as indeed we should in common Reason presuppose) otherwise he must in this Case have believed much more than he had seen. But *Theophilus* proceeds very rationally to shew him his Inconsistency in believing less credible Things in the Pagan Theology upon less Evidence, and then assures him positively, that he deceived himself in imagining that even this Proof would be satisfactory; for he tells him, that if such a Miracle were wrought in his Presence, yet he would find some Way or other to evade it. He would probably have suggested that there was a *Confederacy* between them; or have imputed the Recovery to the Force of *Art*; or have offer'd some such Evasion as hardened Infidelity can always suggest. This was the State of *Autolycus's Mind*, as drawn by one who well knew him: And whether

whether it was proper to offer a Miracle for the Conviction of such an one; or whether the not doing it will be a Proof that the Power itself was withdrawn, may fairly be left to the Judgment of the Impartial.

The next Gift, which he proposes to review, is that of *healing the Sick*. Here the Method, which he has prescribed to his Answerers, (*Pref. p. 34.*) had been used before-hand, the Persons Healing and Healed are specified, and some special Benefit of the Miracle credibly reported. *Tertullian* tells us, that a Christian called *Proculus* cured the Emperor *Severus* of a certain Distemper by the Use of Oyl: For which Service that Emperor was favourable afterwards to the Christians, and kept *Proculus* as long as he lived in his Palace, (*p. 75.*) Another Instance is subjoined of other Cures in the same Method, but this furnishes him with an Objection, that "these Cures may be accounted for probably without a Miracle, through the natural Power and Efficacy of Oyl," (*p. 76.*) This he observes has been found in our Days to be greatly medicinal in one particular Case; from whence he would insinuate that it might be so in all the various Instances of Persons said to have been healed in this Method. This Objection,

jection, had it come from the Mouth of a professed *Unbeliever*, had only been ridiculous, but it is not decent in a *Christian* that recollects that this very Method was prescribed by an Apostle in the Case of miraculous Cures, (*Yam. v. 14.*) and from thence grew into Use in the Church.

The other Argument under this Head is, that the *Heathens* themselves pretended to this Gift (p. 76.) and therefore the Pretence of *Christians* to a miraculous Power in healing Diseases, could have little Effect towards making Proselytes among those who pretended to the same Gift, (p. 77.) I should think on the contrary, that nothing could be more proper for their Conviction than a Claim of superior Power in the same Way, which might detect their Pretensions, if false, and (if they were real, might shew the mightier Hand of God beyond that of inferior Agents. Nor can any Thing prove more to this Purpose than the Instance before given. Doubtless the *Heathen* Emperor had tried the Pretenders of his own Religion before he admitted a *Christian* to prove his Claim, and it is no Wonder that it produced the Effect before spoken of. Dr. M. adds that "unless in this Case we knew "more precisely the Bounds between Nature
"and
"Nature."

" and Miracles, we cannot pay any great REGARD to such Stories." (p. 80.) I am sorry to find such Arguments produced against the Miracles of the primitive Church, as Infidels use against those of the Apostolical Age; and the proper Answer to both is, that Scepticism is endless, whilst real Facts will admit of reasonable Evidence, by which all reasonable Persons will be determined.

From p. 80. to p. 96, we have a Dissertation on the Case of the Demoniacs, which is a Case attended with some Difficulties; but this is a Question that has been largely discussed not long since, to which I cannot presume to add any thing. I shall only observe, that the Insinuations under this Head would hold as strongly, if they are of any Force, against the Scriptural Cases as against others.

The Case of *Prophetic Visions* takes up still more Pages from 96 to 116, though it is by his own Confession the least to the Purpose of any: He himself having before observed " that " Gifts of this Sort were merely Personal, and " do not therefore in any Manner affect or re- " late to the Question now before us," (p. 10.) As to his Collection of Cases under this Head, some of them seem worthy of a divine Inter-
position,
ablow to nonloquio. Isomura VIII
doidw "

position, and I see little more than Dr. M's Suspicions to prove any of them *false*, much less to be *designed Fraud*.
 On the Gift of expounding the Scriptures (p. 169) he advances nothing but what had been laid before, and has been sufficiently answered.
 On the Gift of Tongues he says, p. 119, 120. that "Irenæus, who particularly mentions this Gift, and ascribes it literally to others, appears to have been in great Want of it himself for the Propagation of the Gospel in his own Diocese among the Celts or Gauls; where, as Dr. Cave interprets his Words, it was not the least Part of his Trouble, that He was forced to learn the Language of the Country, a rude and Barbarous Dialect, before he could do any Good upon them, (p. 119, 120.) He mentions this in such a Manner as to shew, that he was conscious that Dr. Cave had here made a Mistake, and said more for Irenæus than ever he had said for himself, yet because it founded for his Purpose, he could not pass over it. Irenæus's Words literally are, But you will not except from us, who reside among the Gauls, and are chiefly engaged in a barbarous Dialect, any artificial Composition of Words which

" which we have not learned, nor the Force
 " of an Orator which we have not aimed at,
 " nor any Ornament of Style or persuasive
 " Eloquence which we are not acquainted
 " with, but you will receive with Friendship,
 " and yourself improve those Things which
 " are written to you with Friendship, plainly,
 " sincerely, and in a Manner peculiar to the
 " Language in which they are written."

καὶ ἐπιγνότοις δὲ πάρ τινῶν τῶν εἰς Κελτοῖς
 διατριβόστων, καὶ πάρ τινα βαρβαροῦ διάλεκτον
 τὸ πλεῖστον ἀχριδημάτων, λόγων τέκνηντον τούτοις
 ὅμοιοις, ὃς δύναμις συγγραφίας, τὸν τούτον
 ἴσχοντας ὃς καλλιτεχνοῦ λέξειν, ὃς πι-
 θεούτα, ὃς τούτοις ὁμοιός αλλὰ αὐτοῖς καὶ αλλι-
 θῶς καὶ ἴδιωτικῶς τὰ μετὰ αἰγάτης σοι γραφόν-
 ται, μετὰ τούτης σὺ προσθέξῃ καὶ ἄυτος αὐτέ-
 σεις αὐτὰ ταῦτα σταυτῷ. (Iren. Pref. ad Lib.
 I. p. 3, 4.) These are the very Words; and if
 any Man can find out in them, that *Irenaeus*
 was put to Difficulties in learning the Lan-
 guage of the *Gauls*, he will discover what I
 cannot so much as perceive is alluded to. The
 Words have no Reference at all to that Ques-
tion; and if we were to draw Inferences from
 them, I think they would rather incline to the
 contrary. Dr. *M.* did not chuse to take this
 Interpretation upon himself, but leaves it upon

M

Dr.

Dr. Cave, and we must place it among the few Overights of that excellent Writer.— But if this be a gross Mistake, and nothing to his Purpose, he makes an Observation of his own on this Head, which he thinks of Importance. “It is not credible,” he says, “that a Gift of such eminent Use should intirely cease, while all the rest were subsisting in full Vigour and abounding every Day more and more.” If according to the common Hypothesis, we admit them all to be true, it is not possible, I say, to imagine any Cause why this in particular should be withdrawn and the rest continued,” (p. 120.) Now besides that he here takes a Point for granted, which he has by no Means proved, namely, that the Gift of Tongues had then ceased, yet if we were to allow the Fact, we should not allow his Observation upon it; for it is not only *possible* but *easy* to assign a good Cause, why this Gift in particular might be withdrawn and the rest continued. If the Design of Miracles was, as Dr. M. elsewhere allows, to root out inveterate Prejudices, then those, which were most likely to have this Effect, were most proper to be continued. But the Gift of Tongues, though as miraculous as any in itself, and particularly useful in enabling

enabling the first Preachers to speak to Persons of all Nations and Languages, yet was the least convincing of any to Gainsayers, unless as in the Case of the Apostles, they knew their Persons and Education before-hand. They could not otherwise be sure whether it might not be the Effect of ~~Art~~ and acquired Learning rather than of *Inspiration*. The Knowledge of many Languages might in Strangers be the Effect of *supernatural* Infusion, or the natural Result of Labour and Industry. Either Way it might be serviceable in the Propagation of the Gospel, but could be no Proof antecedently to the Unconverted. As soon as this Use of it ceased, or was attainable by *human* Means, the *supernatural* Gift itself ceased also, and therefore ceased the First of Any. When the Apostles and others the first Martyrs of Christianity, qualified with this Endowment, had once propagated the Gospel, and made Converts in many Places, the Natives of those Places were able to carry on the Design, and without any Miracle were qualified to teach their own Countrymen in the several Languages wherein they were born. Those only, who became *Missionaries* to foreign Countries, had Occasion for this Gift, and such could not offer it as Evidence to those who knew

nothing of them. And whereas this Author says, "the Gift of Tongues is not easily counterfeited, and therefore was dropped so early in the Primitive Ages," (p. 121.) the very contrary of this is true. It was easy to be pretended to, when they went among Strangers, where they could not be disproved; and even among others such a Fraud was more easily practicable by Means of private Study and Application, than in almost any other Kind of Miracle. The Inferences, which he has drawn from his own Supposition, being apparently founded on a Mistake, need no particular Confutation.

Thus has he reviewed the several Gifts spoken of in the Primitive Times, and attempted to shew the *Incredibility* of them, with what Success, let Impartiality determine. The next Hint which I find to his Purpose is, (p. 130, 136, &c.) where he charges St. Chrysostom and St. Austin with Inconsistency and wilful Falshood, in allowing that Miracles were ceased, and yet relating some that happened in their own Time. The Distinction, I think, is very plain and obvious, and they have even expressed it themselves, that the standing ordinary Power of working Miracles in Defence of Christianity was ceased, tho' they thought some

some Instances still remained of supernatural Interpositions in particular Cases for personal Comfort, Direction, or Admonition. He then inserts many Stories rather for the Diversion of his Reader than the Support of his Argument; arguing now and then from the *Superstition* of the Age that nothing was to be credited, and sometimes even from the *Incredulity* of it, that they had found out the Cheat. With this two-edged Weapon he attacks and ridicules all the Accounts that he introduces, till he comes to the Story of *Simeon Stylites*, over which he triumphs beyond Measure. But the chief Foundation of his Triumph depends upon a Connection of his own, that his supposed Miracles were wrought in Justification of the Peculiarities of his History. "This," says he, "is the Account in short of *Simeon Stylites*, the bare Recital of which, tho' attested by ten *Theodorets*, must needs expose the Absurdity of believing that it could in any Manner be suggested or directed by Divine Inspiration," (p. 168.) But the Question will be, Who ever supposed that it was? His Miracles were never pretended to be wrought in Confirmation of the Prudence or Piety of spending his Life upon a Pillar. But if, as *Theodoreret* represents, "his singular

"Austerities

" Austerities had spread his Fame thro' the
 " World, so that People of all Nations and
 " Languages flocked to him in Crouds from
 " the remotest Parts of the Earth, from *Spain*,
 " and *Gaul*, and even *Britain* itself," then,
 if on such Occasions Providence thought fit
 by him to work Miracles for the Conversion
 of some to the Christian Faith, or the Con-
 firmation of others in it; or for the Refor-
 mation of the Wicked or Confirmation of the
 virtuous Believer, it will require other Argu-
 ments than the Dr. has yet produced to shew
 that this Supposition is incredible, or that such
 an Interposition by such an Instrument would
 be unworthy the Wisdom and Goodness of
 Providence.

He next exults upon a Circumstance that
 he has discovered, which he thinks under-
 mines at once all that Dr. *Berriman* has said
 on the Miracle wrought on that Orthodox So-
 ciety of Christians in *Africa*, whose Tongues
Hunnerick the Vandal ordered to be cut out;
 and who afterwards were enabled to speak ar-
 ticulately and distinctly without their Tongues.
 This Circumstance is, that " in the Memoirs
 " of the Academy of Sciences at *Paris* drawn
 " up by an eminent Physician, there is a par-
 " ticular Account given of a Girl born with-
 " out

" out a Tongue, who yet talked as distinctly
 " and easily as if she had enjoyed the full Be-
 " nefit of that Organ; and there is a Re-
 " ference to a Story of the like Nature told
 " eighty Years before," (p. 184.) The fol-
 lowing Paragraph is the triumphant Result of
 this Discovery. " Let our Dr. then defend
 " this Miracle with all the Power of his Zeal
 " and Learning: Let him urge the Testimo-
 " nies of Senators, Chancellors, Bishops,
 " Archbishops, and Popes; of Persons who
 " had too much Learning and Judgment to
 " be deceived in so important a Fact, tho'
 " they lived an hundred Years after it; of
 " *Aeneas* also of *Gaza*, who opened their very
 " Mouths to make his Observations with
 " more Exactness; Yet the humble Testi-
 " mony of this single Physician, grounded on
 " real Experiment, will overturn at once all
 " his pompous List of dignified Authorities,
 " and convince every Man of Judgment, that
 " this pretended Miracle, like all the other
 " Fictions, which have been imposed upon
 " the World under that Character, owed its
 " whole Credit to our Ignorance of the
 " Powers of Nature," (p. 185. Now as he
 has passed Sentence before-hand, I must con-
 fess myself to be a Man of no Judgment, for
mag 10

I see not the least Connection between his *Relation* and his *Inference*, between the Truth of the one History from *Paris* and the Falshood of the other from *Africa*. If this Gentleman could any Way have turned it to the Account of his Argument, he could have found out many Reasons to question the *humble Testimony of this single Physician*, and to doubt the Reality of the Experiment; but admitting it to be as certain as he pleases, how does this affect the Case of the Miracle reported and urged by Dr. *Berriman*, or shew that its whole Credit was owing to our Ignorance of the Powers of Nature? Those, who have hitherto wrote against the Dr.'s historical Account, have dwelt on the Incredibility of restoring a *Faculty* without the *Organ*, and called this " a Miracle of Miracles ;" whereas now it seems there was nothing at all miraculous in the Case, but Nature itself is sufficient to the Purpose. Now if the Dr. will own that he does in Earnest believe, that Men may talk as well without Tongues as with, I shall think that they do him great Injustice who charge *Incredulity* to his Account; and that he is very rational and consistent in rejecting this Relation as no Miracle. But if he will not own this, if he admits the Tongue to be (generally speaking) the

Organ of Speech, if the Instance referred to in the *Parisian Academy of Sciences* be (if true) a singular and extraordinary Case; if it be thought possible, that among Thousands of Thousands a Mouth may be so particularly formed as to utter articulate Sounds without the usual Instrument of Speech, (some Ex- crescence probably supplying in some Measure that Defect) yet would it be any Thing less than miraculous that this should happen to be the Case of a whole Society, (for the Number is represented as considerable) whose Tongues were cut out by a Persecutor to prevent their preaching a discountenanced Doctrine? Those, who give Credit to every Relation in *Philosophical Transactions*, and much more who from a Case reported for its Singularity, argue upon it as the common Course of Nature, should be tender of charging others with Superstition and Facility of Belief, or with want of Judgment and weak Reasonings. I am not ignorant that there is a late Mention of a like Instance of a Woman now living, that can talk without a Tongue, in our own Philosophical Transactions at Home, which I wonder had not come to Dr. M.'s Knowledge; but tho' her Discourse is said to be *intelligible*, it is not pretended to be as *clear* as any other

N Person's,

Person's, or like the Speech of one that has a Tongue. Her Speech, has likewise, as I am informed, gradually improved, which, with some other Circumstances, distinguishes it from that of the *African Confessors*, who spoke both clearly and readily.^{183.} After all, I doubt not but that this Woman's Case (if true) is very singular; and am far from believing that a Hundred other Persons, under the same Misfortune, would ever arrive at such a Degree of Recovery. Dr. M.'s Suggestion, that the Tongues of the Confessors spoken of might not be cut to the Roots, had been expressly guarded against and obviated by the Evidence that Dr. B. had offered; yet without any Attempt of invalidating that Evidence, the Suggestion is here *repeated* in order to account for the Fact as a natural Event; and when a Circumstance was added, which was undeniably *supernatural*, and cut off a Possibility of that Evasion, then this is set aside with no better or other Answer, than it was a Circumstance so singular and extraordinary, "that it carries with it a Suspicion of Art and Contrivance to enhance the Lustre of the Miracle," (p. 183.) Thus greater or less Degrees of Evidence of a supernatural Interposition are alike made Use of to disprove it; and his

Arguments

Arguments in this and in other Places are a proper Comment on the *Principle* he at first set out with concerning the *Incredibility of all Miracles*. Some farther Observations might be added on this Case, but I really have not Faith enough to believe, that he was himself in Earnest, when he says that the Instance in the *French Memoirs* "clears up all our Doubts, and intirely decides the Question with Relation to the *African Confessors*." (p. 184.)

I cannot pass by his next Charge which he casts on *all* the Fathers, though he attempts to bring his Proof from but *one* of them, namely that "they trained the Ages, in which they lived, to blind Credulity and Superstition, by teaching them to consider the Impossibility of a Thing as an Argument for the Belief of it." (p. 186.) The Citation is from *Tertullian*, (*de Carne Christi* §. 5.) and when it stands by itself, must bear a strange Appearance to common Readers. But a Man, who has read the other Writings of *Tertullian*, (who with some Intricacies and Difficulties of Style is an acute Reasoner and very shrewd Observer) would at first Sight imagine that he could not be so extremely and ridiculously absurd, as he is here represented; and that he could not

expect to make Converts by such Kind of Reasonings as these. And when he comes to examine the Point, he will see clearly the Drift and Design of the Argument; and that though the Expressions are *strong*, yet in Reference to what he had been saying before, they are easily enough *intelligible*, though the Phrase may be *incautious*, yet the Sense is *justifiable*. *Tertullian* was commenting on those Words of St. Paul's (which though extremely significant, may by a like perverse Interpretation be made liable to this Charge as well as this Father's Comment) *If any Man among you seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool that he may be wise. For the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God* (1 Cor. iii. 18, 19.) And then applying to his Adversary, who denied the Reality of Christ's Incarnation and Sufferings, " do not destroy" says he, " the only Hope of the whole World, " for in this Article thou underminest the " most fundamental Glory of our Faith. " Whatever is herein," (i. e. in your Opinion) " unworthy of the Deity, is yet most expedient to my Welfare. I am intitled to Salvation on this very Condition, if I am not ashamed of my Lord, who has himself said, I will be ashamed of him that is ashamed

ashamed of me. Whereas otherwise" (*i.e.*
on your Supposition) " I see nothing that can
" be any Ground or Cause of Shame, which
" can give me any Opportunity by the Con-
" tempt of Disgrace to testify a proper Bold-
" ness and successful Progress in that which
" is Foolishness with this World." He then
goes on to shew how the true Faith *did yield*
just Matter of Trial; and lay them open to
all Sorts of Imputations. " The Son of God,"
says he, " is become incarnate, I am not
" ashamed of it, because it is the very Article
" which (according to human Wisdom) is the
" proper Matter of Shame.—The Son of
" God likewise died, it is very properly an
" Article of Divine Faith, because it is
" Foolishness with Men. Being buried he
" rose again: It is certain (that is, on our
" Principle of a supernatural Interposition)
" because it is beyond the Power of Nature;
" and must be impossible in their Account
" who judge only by the established Course of
" Nature"; and then he goes on very properly
to apply these Reflections to establish the Point
that he was upon, namely the Certainty of
our Saviour's *real Assumption* of human Na-
ture. *Non eris sapiens, nisi stultus seculo fueris,*
Dei Stulta credendo.—Parce unicæ Spei totius

videlicet his quibus non videlicet Orbis

Orbis, qui destruis necessarium Decus Fidei.
 Quodcunque Deo indignum est, mibi expeditt.
 Salvo sum, si non confundar de Domino meo.
 Qui me, inquit, confusus fuerit, confundar &
 ego eum: Alias non invenio materias Confusionis,
 quæ me per Contemptum Ruboris probent, bene
 impudentem & feliciter Stultum. Natus est Dei
 Filius. Non pudet quia Pudendum est. Et mor-
 tuus est Dei Filius, prorsus credibile est quia inept-
 tum est. Et sepultus resurrexit certum est quia im-
 possible est. Sed hæc quomodo in illo vera erunt, si
 ipse non fuit verus, &c. (*De Carne Christi* §. 5.)
 Thus has he in strong Terms explained and
 illustrated St. Paul's Doctrine of becoming a
Fool that he might be wise, and our Saviour's
 Precept of owning him and his Religion in all
 those Articles, which the World would turn
 to Shame and Ridicule. Now these Doc-
 trines, which he instances in, of the Incarna-
 tion, Death and Resurrection of the Son of
 God, were the very Matters of Offence, the
 chief Stumbling-Blocks to Gainsayers, who
 charged them as unworthy the Honour of
 God, as irrational, and even impossible. These
 very Charges strengthened the Christians in
 their Confession of them, who were hereby
 reminded, that these were the Times and these
 the Articles, in which they were to avow the
 Truth, to glorify their Saviour, and thereby

to

to intitle themselves to his Promise. These Charges were a Completion of the Predictions that foretold them, and in that Sense were a real Confirmation of those Truths. With this Reference to the *Context* the Sense is plain, and could scarce be overlooked by any one who gave himself the Trouble of reading the Whole. Is then such a Citation of these Words *separately* an Act of common Justice to this Author? Or is it a fair Representation to set him forth as urging seriously, and abstractedly from all other Considerations, the *Disgrace* of an Article to be the Foundation of its *Glory*, the real *Absurdity* of it to be a Proof of its *Credibility*, and its absolute *Impossibility* to be a Demonstration of its *Certainty*? If such Liberties are taken, the Credit of the best Authors will not be safe; but single Sentences with the Comment of an *ingenuous Satyrist* may almost at any Time be rendred *ridiculous*. But may we not presume, that *real Grounds* of the Charges of Folly and Absurdity are wanting, when Pieces of an Argument, whose *Sense* depends on their *Connection*, are thus cited to render an Author contemptible? Dr. M. argues in this Manner in a like Case. " In all Inquiries of this Nature," he says, " we may take it for a certain Rule,

" that

" that those, who are conscious of the Power
" of working true Miracles, can never be
" tempted either to invent, or to propagate
" any which are false." (p. 187.) Most cer-
tainly they would not *invent*, nor *knowingly*
propagate any such, but, according to an Ob-
servation before offered, those who knew the
Reality of many Miracles, might be the more
easily influenced to admit the Report of others
upon any plausible Appearance, and might
thereby *unwittingly* be made instrumental to
the Propagation of a false Account. But the
Argument seems to hold much stronger in the
Case of *unfair Citations*, that *They* would not
make them, who could as well ridicule an
Author by giving his genuine Sense. If *Ter-
tullian* had asserted any Thing half so gross
as his own proper Opinion, it would have
been more to Dr. M.'s Purpose to have pro-
duced it, and would have hurt this Father's
Credit much more than this imperfect Ac-
count of one Link of a Chain of Reasoning,
which is too absurd to be supposed to be the
Author's real Meaning; and which the Con-
nection plainly shews to be otherwise. It is
evident from thence, that in *the one Part* of his
Anitthesis he had a View to the real Faith of
Christians,

*Christians, in the other to the vain Objections of
Unbelievers.*

The remaining Head of the Inquiry is to obviate some of the most plausible Objections against the Dr.'s new Scheme.

And the first of these is, that "the Authority of the Books of the New Testament, which were transmitted to us by the Hands of the ancient Fathers, will hereby be rendered precarious and uncertain," (p. 190.) The Answer is, that "the Authority of these Books does not depend on the Faith of the Fathers, but on the general Credit and Reception which they found with all the private Christians of those Ages, whose Interest it was to preserve them, and whose religious Regard for them, besides the Jealousies of Parties, did excite their Care to preserve them." But if the principal Teachers and Governors of the Church were so credulous and superstitious, and so little scrupulous of any Arts or Means to propagate their Opinions, I fear the private People taught by them, must suffer in their Credit likewise, and might not be the proper Guardians of the sacred *Depositum*. Besides, one Writer, who quotes a Book publickly, when the Authority and the Contents

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of, it are easy to be examined, does more towards preserving the Genuineness of that Book, than an hundred private People, who have that Book in Possession. And if we consider how much the People in those Times depended on their Ecclesiastical Governors, we shall find a strong Connection between the Character of the Primitive Writers, for Fidelity, and the Authority of the sacred Writings which they professed to make the Rule of their Faith. And though I like his Attempt of supporting the Authority of the sacred Canon, consistently with his own Principles, yet I cannot help thinking that the Difficulties which he has soon after suggested concerning private Persons obtaining Copies of Books, do in a great Measure weaken the Force of it.

But I like the next Part of his Apology much worse. " If the Objection," he says, " be true," (that is, that the Authority of the Books of the New Testament will hereby be rendered precarious and uncertain) " it cannot " in any Manner hurt his Argument. If " the Craft and Credulity of Witnesses should " always detract from the Credit of their Tes- " timony, who can help it ? " He adds, " If " the Authority of any Books be really weak- " ned

" ned by the Character which I have given
" of the Fathers, will it follow from thence
" that the Character must necessarily be
" false?" (p. 192.) It will follow, I think,
at least that the Argument is *inconsistent* in the
Mouth of a *professed Christian*, and that his
Opposers deserve better Names than " fierce
" Bigots, hypocritical Zealots, and interested
" Politicians." One may suitably apply some of
the forecited Words of *Tertullian*, *Parce unicæ
spei totius Orbis*. The Belief of the Scrip-
tures, those of the New Testament especially,
is the Foundation of every valuable Hope, the
Support of Virtue in this World, and of a
comfortable Prospect into the next ; and if a
Man can himself look with Indifference on
the Consequence of weakning that Belief, and
cry calmly " who can help it ? " He should
at least be less severe in his Imputations on
those, who think the Importance of their
Faith deserves more Zeal, and are earnest to
establish so perfect a Rule of Faith and Man-
ners, and so comfortable a Security for future
Expectations. I cannot enter into that *specu-
lative* Zeal for Truth, that seems to leave
Men regardless of the only sufficient Enforce-
ment of Morality at present, and the only
certain Foundation of a glorious Immortality

hereafter. I cannot join with or approve of that Profession of a late Defender of Christianity, that " he hopes he has no more Prejudice for the Holy Scriptures than he has against them ; and that it will be equal to him whether, after a fair and full Examination of the Matter, they are well or ill-grounded ; he having no Concern for any Thing but Truth on which Side soever it lies."

Now I confess I have too much Concern for the present and future Welfare of all Mankind, as well as of myself, to be thus indifferent whether the only Hope worth living for be well-grounded or not. I should think it would move and afflict any thinking Man, to find all the glorious Privileges and Promises, which have been made to him in the Gospel, to be at last not securely established. And though a Consequence of this Kind does not absolutely, as Dr. M. says, determine the Truth or Falseness of the Principle from which it results, yet it shews the Importance of the Question and the Danger of it too in a Christian's Account, and may well justify the most zealous Endeavours to confute it.

The Second Objection that he takes Notice of against his Scheme (and it is indeed a very material one) is, " that all Suspicion

" of

" of Fraud in the Case of the primitive Miracles seems to be precluded by that public Appeal and Challenge, which the Christian Apologists make to their Enemies the Heathens, to come and see with their own Eyes the Reality of the Facts which they attest," (p. 193.) I was wondring before I began to read his Performance, how he would get off of this Difficulty; and the Evasion is by the Help of an Assertion false in itself, and inconsistent with his own Confessions elsewhere. He has collected all the abusive Accounts of the Christians, that are to be met with in Heathen Writers, in order to shew that " they were held in such Contempt by the Generality of the better Sort, that they scarce ever thought it worth while to make any Inquiry about them, or to examine their Pretensions." But it happens that some of those very Testimonies speak of this Superstition's being " spread far and wide, among Persons of both Sexes, and of every Age and Condition, and again represent them as Persons of *innocent Lives*, and liable to a general Odium only for the *Novelty* of their Religion, or *Superstition*, as they call it. And though I cannot without Concern observe the worst Part of the Account of their very Enemies particularly

particularly selected and repeated with Pleasure, yet at present we need only remark on the *Fact*, which it was intended to establish. Dr. M. represents the whole Society of Christians as " a Sect at that Time so utterly despised, that it cannot be imagined, that Men of Figure and Fortunes would pay any Attention to their Apologies or Writings," (p. 197.) But though their *Doctrine* was despised before it was examined and understood, yet their *Numbers* certainly at that Time were not so inconsiderable as to be treated with such Contempt. Tertullian in the very *Apology*, wherein he made that famous Challenge, that any Christian whatsoever should at the Hazard of his Life engage to dispossess any *Dæmoniac* in their Presence, does likewise strongly insist on the REGARD due to their *Numbers* and the *high Offices* that many of them sustained; and on their Peaceableness of Temper and Sense of Duty who patiently submitted to such Treatment, when they knew their own Strength. After having intimated that the Professors of Christianity were extended as far as the known Limits of the World, he adds particularly " We are but of Yesterday, and have already filled all your Places and Offices, " your

“ your Cities, your Islands, your Forts, your
“ Towns, your Assemblies, your very Camps;
“ your Wards, your Companies, your Palace,
“ your Senate, and your Forum. Your Tem-
“ ples only we leave to yourselves.—Nay we
“ could even without *taking up Arms* or en-
“ tering into an *offensive War*, fight suffici-
“ ently against you, only by withdrawing
“ ourselves through Resentment from you.
“ For if so great a Multitude of Men, as
“ we are, had but retired from you into some
“ remote Part of the World, the Loss of
“ such a Number of Citizens of all Degrees,
“ would have undermined your very Govern-
“ ment; and such a Desertion would have
“ been ample Revenge. You would certainly
“ have been astonished at the Wilderness that
“ you would have been left in, at the gene-
“ ral Silence and Stillness of the evacuated
“ City, and would have wanted even Subjects
“ to preside over there.” *Hesterni sumus &*
vestra omnia implevimus, Urbes, Insulas, Castel-
la, Municipia, Conciliabula, Castra ipsa, Tri-
bis, Decurias, Palatium, Senatum, Forum.
Sola Vobis relinquimus Templa.—Potuimus &
inermes nec rebelles, sed tantummodo discordes so-
lius Divortii Invidiā adversus vos dimicasse.
Si enim tanta Vis Hominum in aliquem Orbis
remoti

*remoti Sinum abrupissimus a Vobis, suffudisset
 utique Dominationem vestram tot qualiumcunque
 Amisso Civium; imo etiam et ipsa Destitutione
 punisset. Proculdubio expavissetis ad Solitudinem
 vestram, ad Silentium Rerum & Stuporem quen-
 dam quasi mortua urbis, quæfissetis quibus in ea
 imperassetis, (Tert. Apol. §. 57.)* Certainly
 when Christianity had so far prevailed, and
 its Profelytes surrounded and served the Court
 in all Manner of Offices, it may be thought
 probable, that Men of Figure and Fortune
 might not be above paying some Attention to
 it. If it be said that the primitive Christians
 represented this Matter too much to their own
 Advantage, I will next cite an Author, who
 cannot be charged with too much Prejudice in
 their Favour. Dr. M. himself (*Pref. p. 28,*
29.) is of Opinion that “Christianity had
 “ gained an Establishment in every Quarter
 “ of the known World, while some of the
 “ Apostles were still living, insomuch that
 “ the extraordinary Gifts, which were poured
 “ out in the fullest Measure on the Apostles
 “ and other Disciples, to enable them more
 “ easily to over-rule the inveterate Prejudices
 “ both of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear
 “ up against the discouraging Shocks of po-
 “ pular Rage and Persecution, were now,
 “ when

" when the Foundation was laid sufficient to sustain the great Fabric designed, and the first and principal Difficulties conquered, less and less wanted, and within the Apostolic Age finally withdrawn, and the Gospel left to make the rest of its Way by its genuine Strength." If this Representation be admitted, we should be apt to think, that a Religion, which had already so universally prevailed in all Parts, and was so well established as to need nothing but its own *Divine Graces* to recommend it, might well deserve and indeed could scarce have escaped the Attention of Persons of the first Consequence. But Dr. M. who loves *Facts* in Confirmation of *general Assertions*, has confirmed his Opinion of the general Reception of the Gospel so as to need no Miracles, by a Proof of this Kind. He thinks that the Christian Brethren of St. Ignatius had Interest enough at the Court of Rome, to offer to make Use of it to preserve him from the cruel Death that he was sentenced to. Such an Offer, whether successful or not, must suppose considerable Degree of Power and Influence in the Friends of the Christian Cause; and yet they, who within much less than one Century from the Publication of the Gospel, are supposed to

have had so much Weight and Authority, are now, after another Century, represented as so inconsiderable, that they had no Friend to present their Apologies, nor "would any give " themselves the Trouble to read or consider " the Merit of their Writings," (p. 197.) The *Insinuation* of the *Danger*, which the Publication of their Apologies would expose them to, was of all others the *weakest* in one who knew so much of their History; who knew their Fearlessness on such Occasions, and the Triumph with which they were always ready to lay down their Lives in any Services for the Propagation of their Faith.—But to expose the Apologies of the first Christians to the utmost Scorn and Contempt, Dr. M. is pleased to parallel their Case with a supposed Address from the *Methodists*, *Moravians*, or *French Prophets*, to the King and Parliament at this Time; who he presumes would not pay any Regard to such Address, or take it at all into Consideration. But if any of these Sects were spreading over the World, if they laid Claim to the Power of Miracles in Support of their Novelties, and if several Members of Parliament were already converted to their Notions and Practices, (all which must be supposed to make the Case parallel) then I make

make no Doubt but that their Apology would have some Regard paid to it, would find some, who would be willing to propose, and many who would consent to an Examination of it. Or even if they had no Friend within Doors, yet the very Claim of Miracles exhibited publickly and addressed to the great Council of the Nation would, I am persuaded, excite Attention, and not be thought beneath their Notice. Suppose that they held the Claimants in as sovereign Contempt, as Dr. M. tells us the Emperor and Senate of *Rome* held the first *Christians*, yet they would probably for that Reason appoint an Inquiry into it, on Purpose to undeceive the People, and punish the supposed Impostors; and then if their miraculous Powers were *genuine*, they would have an Opportunity of shining to the better Advantage. And however inattentive the Dr. may suppose the supreme Council of the Nation to be to Things of this Kind, yet as it happens a little unluckily for him, the Parliament has under Consideration at this very Time an Address from the *Moravian Bretbren*, praying Regard and Indulgence to their particular Opinion and Practices; which they have thought not unworthy their Regard, but have referred to a careful Examination.

The Difficulties which are raised (p. 197, 198.) about providing and publishing any considerable Number of Copies of any such Writings, are in a great Measure imaginary. It will be no Objection to the Dr. that the Remark would equally affect the Case of the Scriptures; for if it does, "Who can help it?" But it may be considered that the Professors of Christianity then valued their Faith at another Rate than we who were born to that invaluable Privilege. They were just delivered from Darkness and Uncertainty, and knew how to estimate such a Deliverance. They dedicated their whole Time and Fortune to the Service of that Cause, and were forward to contribute to every Thing which might promote it. And tho' *written* Copies cannot be so speedily obtained and so easily dispersed as *printed* ones, yet by that Time the principal Apologies were written, there were numerous Converts made, and many of them of considerable Affluence. There could be no Want of Intelligence concerning such Writings, when Disciples filled all Parts and Places; and there was no Want of Industry or Generosity, or Resolution, to circulate what might be so serviceable to the general Cause.

The third Objection that he attempts to obviates, (p. 199) is, that "no Suspicion of Craft can reasonably be entertained against Persons of such exalted Piety, who exposed themselves to Persecution, and even to Martyrdom, in Confirmation of the Truth of what they taught." His Answer is, that "nothing gives so invincible a Prejudice and so strong a Bias to the Mind of Man as Religious Zeal in Favour of any Thing that is thought useful to the Object which excites it" (p. 220.) If the Point in Question had been their *Credulity* or *Superstition*, this might have sounded somewhat to the Purpose, but when the Objection was, that "no Suspicion of Craft could be entertained against Persons of undoubted Piety and invincible Fortitude," where is the Force of the Answer, that Religious Zeal biasses Men to every Thing that is useful to it? For of what Use could *Falshood* be to them or to their *Faith*? If it passed undiscovered, it must, according to the plainest Doctrines and Precepts of the Religion that they profess'd, sentence them to future Condemnation; and if it should be detected, it would bring certain Shame on the Faith which they desired thereby to propagate. There could neither be *Policy* nor *Piety* in the

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Use

Use of such Means to promote a Dispensation really divine. There could be no Room for *Self-Deceit* in so plain a Case, and their known Contempt of all Dangers and Difficulties, even to Death itself, in Defence of what they thought to be right, precludes any other Exception.

But Dr. M. endeavours to take off the Force of this Observation and the Credit which Martyrdom might add to their Testimony, by ascribing their Perseverance in the severest Trials to mere Obstinacy,—to Vain-Glory,—to the Hope of escaping from Purgatory,—to the Expectation of supernatural Deliverance from Pain in the Experiment,—and to the Fear of worldly Infamy and Reproach in the Case of Desertion, (p. 201, &c.) Thus are the primitive Confessors martyred over again in their *Memories*, and robbed of their Good Name after they had long since sacrificed every other Blessing in Discharge of their Conscience. The gross Fallacy of this Misrepresentation is, that here those *inferior* Considerations are proposed as the *direct* View in, or *principal* Inducement to Martyrdom, which were at most but *assisting* Circumstances to the Resolution of a good Man who was undauntedly endeavouring to do his Duty and to glorify his Maker.

A natural Steadiness of Temper, a Regard to the good Word and Esteem of our Fellow-Creatures, a View of the extraordinary Support of former Martyrs, a Desire of attaining the highest Degree of future Rewards, all or any of these Considerations might strengthen a Christian in the Endurance of Sufferings; but do they take away the Principle of Obedience as the main Ground of their Resignation, or lessen the Merit of it? Would any of these, abstracted from the Consideration of Duty, induce any one voluntarily to suffer Martyrdom? And if they would not, how do they detract from the Esteem due to the Martyrs, or weaken the Force of their Testimony? But from what follows we might suppose, that he would answer to the former Question in the Affirmative, namely, that those Considerations alone would induce Men to become Martyrs, for he adds, "These Principles and Motives had such Force as sometimes to animate even bad Men to endure Martyrdom," (p. 209.) Such Persons could not well be presumed to have any Hopes in the other World, and therefore must, ⁱⁿ their intimates, be influenced to such Resolution by the meanest and worst of the forementioned Motives. But we should expect to see such a

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Fact very evidently proved before we were induced to believe it, and if unquestionable Instances of it could be assigned, I should then imagine, that by a strong Presumption those Persons might hope that such an horrid Act of Resolution might expiate former Offences, and might therefore chuse rather to venture through the Terrors of Death than engage again in the Allurements of Life: This, I say, would be the Interpretation which I should put upon such Instances, for I could never believe that Men who were conscious of Guilt and apprehensive of Vengeance, should thus with all their Sins about them, and without any penitent View, hasten themselves in this Manner to their future Reckoning upon the mere Motives of *Obstinacy*, but *Vain-Glory*. Men of great Sincerity, though under great Misakes, might possibly go through a fiery Trial to a strong Opinion; but it could not suppose that Dr. M^r by his Mist could mean *Heresies*, whdi he explystells us soon after what he did not; but that he meant "the proud, the covetous, the drunkards and the lewd - naming the Orthodox Martyrs themselves" (ibid.) Now shew our Attention and Curiosity, how raised to the highest, and we cannot then be eager to know, whether those vicious
for E Characters

Characters are, and who the Persons were, that are thus enroll'd in the Number of the Orthodox Martyrs. But how great will be our Disappointment, when all this Apparatus ends in a Quotation from St. Cyprian, wherein he complains of some, who behaved well in a State of Persecution, but escaping Martyrdom, did afterwards, upon the Relaxation of the Persecution, deviate into Faults and Immoralities unworthy of their former Character? Is it any thing extraordinary then, that Men sometimes change from better to worse; or that they behaved more commendably in Adverlity than Prosperity, or were less moved with the Terrors of Death than with the Allurements of Life? Are not the same Alterations from a former good Habit daily seen; and are not the same flexible Tempers in Point of *Pleasure*, which are resolute enough in Times of *Danger*, frequently observable? But what is all this to the Purpose in Respect to the Case of those, who actually died Martyrs in the Faith and Fear of God, and upon the Strength of those great and good Principles? How does it lessen the Force of their Character and their Testimony, that others, who seemed ready at first to have trod the same Path with them, did afterwards fall off and

disgrace

disgrace the Hopes they had once raised, by a wicked Life in the Conclusion?

Why no, Dr. M. will say, for " it was not his Design by what he has said on the Subject of Martyrdom to detract in any Manner from the real Merit and just Praife of those primitive Martyrs, who with an invincible Constancy sustained the Cause of Christ at the Expence of their Lives," (p. 212.) But why then was this degrading Account of Martyrdom and the Motives to it inserted? Why he tells you, " it was to expose the Vanity of those extravagant Honours and that idolatrous Worship which are paid to them indiscriminately by the Church of *Rome*," (p. 213.) That is, because it was nothing to the Purpose as to the Point that he was treating of, he brought it in to prove *another* Point, which Nobody was thinking of, and which might have been done more easily and effectually by Arguments of another Nature. Well, but we will accept of his Confession of the *Impertinence* of this Digression, if his *Admirers*, in whose Approbation he thinks himself so happy, (*Pref.* p. 3.) will but do the same; for the Appearance of another Design in those Insinuations was so obvious, that if this was really his Intent, only to let us know that we

should

Should not fall down and worship the Martyrs, and not to detract from their real Merit and just Praise, then the good Man has been much mistaken, and I may say equally by his Advocates and Opponents.—But to make some *Show* of a Connection with his Subject, he adds, that the Design of what he had offered on this Subject was “ more especially to shew, “ that the Circumstance of their Martyrdom, “ while it gives the strongest Proof of their “ Sincerity of their Faith and Trust in the “ Promises of the Gospel, adds nothing to “ the Character of their Knowledge or their “ Sagacity, nor consequently any Weight to “ their Testimony in Preference to that of any “ other Christian whatsoever,” (*ibid.*) Now if he had not here expressly unsaid what he had been saying before, I should have thought that his View had been to shew the direct contrary, namely, “ that their Martyrdom was *not* “ the strongest Proof of the Sincerity of “ their Faith and Trust in the Promises of the “ Gospel” : For if bad Men were sometimes animated by unworthy Motives to induce Martyrdom, then how could this be such a sure Proof of their Sincerity? But since he now allows that it was, then this first Part of the Sentence absolutely overthrows the latter. For

that which gives the strongest Proof of a Man's Sincerity (stronger than any other) must proportionably add Weight to his Testimony. No says Dr. M. it " adds nothing to the Character of their Knowledge or Sagacity," (this we may allow but not the Consequence) " nor consequently any Weight to their Testimony in Preference to that of any other just and devout Christian whatsoever." Now with Respect to Men, who must judge by Appearances, and cannot see into each other's Hearts, this must be a great Mistake. The Testimony indeed of all just and devout Christians, of equal Knowledge, must in itself be equal; but we can judge better of the Integrity and Devotion of *Martyrs* than of any other Christian whatsoever, and therefore with Reason put greater Confidence in them. Other Men may have an Intent to *deceive* in all their outward Show of Honesty and Piety; and though Charity, and indeed Self-Love, will incline us to judge favourably of fair Appearances, yet certainly when Men give up their Lives in Confirmation of their Veracity, and appeal to the Searcher of Hearts with their dying Breath for the Truth of their Pretensions, all Occasion of Doubt and Distrust is taken away, and we have greater Security of their

their Sincerity than we can possibly have of other Mens. *Martyrdom* will certainly prevent the Imputation of *Hypocrisy*, and will therefore add to the Credibility of their Testimony. The Stories, which he has inserted in the Margin, weaken not in the least the Force of this Observation; for there is a wide Difference between the Attestation of *Opinions* and of *Facts*.

The last Objection that he takes Notice of is, that "to reject the unanimous Testimony of the Fathers in their Reports of the Primitive Miracles, will destroy the Faith and Credit of all History," (p. 214.) The Answer to this is, that "it is meer Cant, has been used by Heathens, by Christians, by Papists in their several Turns, but has really no Sense at all in it;—that those who object it, if called on, to explain themselves, would find it difficult to tell what they meant by it;—that Experience contradicts it, for though there have been Contemners of Miracles in all Ages, yet History has maintained its Ground through them all;—that the History of Miracles is of a Kind totally different from that of common Events;—that weak Men cannot attest them, because a Suspicion will arise

" from

" from their Weakness; nor wise Men, because
 " a farther Suspicion will arise from their Skill
 " and secret Designs,"--and in Fact, that Opini-
 ons and Accounts have been well attested and
 universally received, which are now known
 and acknowledged to be false, (p. 214, to 228.)
 Now as there is a Mixture of Truth and
 Falshood in these Remarks, it may not be
 improper to distinguish them a little more
 particularly.

He acknowledges then that his Arguments
 would destroy the Faith of the *History of Miracles* (though not of common Events) which
 is a Concession that may reasonably alarm all
 sincere *Christians*. The Impossibility of pro-
 ving the Certainty of *any* miraculous Events
 upon the Principles that he has laid down,
 may well excite the Attention and Concern of
 all who do believe the History of the Gospel,
 and who think the Welfare of Mankind de-
 pends upon the Belief of it.

It may be observed in the next Place, that
 the same Principles are as applicable to the
 Case of common Events, and are introductory
 of universal Scepticism, which is what, I pre-
 sume, they would explain themselves to mean,
 who have charged the Dr.'s Scheme as subver-
five

five of the Faith and Credit of History. For suppose an Historical Fact proposed to my Attention and Belief, it is but saying, that if the Witness was a weak Man, he might be imposed upon; and if he was a wise One, he might have a Design of imposing upon me; and here is already Answer to all that can be urged in Favour of any Testimony whatsoever. The Dr. himself who seems angry with others for saying this in Consequence of his Doctrine, had said it himself in full and strong Terms, (*Pref. p. 9, 10.*) "The Credibility of Witnesses depends on a Variety of Principles wholly concealed from us; and though in many Cases it may reasonably be presumed, yet in none can it certainly be known. For it is common with Men out of crafty and selfish Views to dissemble and deceive, or out of Weakness and Credulity to embrace and defend with Zeal what the Craft of others had imposed upon them; but plain Facts cannot delude us; cannot speak any other Language, or give any other Information, but what flows from Nature and Truth." But then these same plain Facts must fall immediately under the Evidence of our own Senses; for if they are but ever so little remote from our Time or Place,

Place, we must receive them from the Report of others; and then we shall be involved again in all the Difficulties attending the Case of Testimony, and shall raise Suspicions from the Credibility of weak Men, or the Craft of wise ones. This is reducing all Belief to what we hear, and see, and feel ourselves, which is the Purport of the Objection proposed. If the Concession be repeated that "the Credibility of Witnesses may in many Cases be reasonably presumed, though in none it can certainly be known;" we shall lay Claim to the Benefit of this Observation, and insist on this reasonable Presumption in many Cases, where Miracles as well as other Events are attested. He has not yet proved the Impossibility of them; nay he has even granted that there may be Occasions worthy of them. On the Strength of these Concessions the Character of the Witnesses remains to be examined, and if they are to all Appearance unexceptionable, a bare Possibility of Mistake is not to be pleaded against clear and positive Evidence. If it be, we are then reduced again to believe only what we see; and the forementioned Objection stands in its full Force; if it be not, we are then only to look into the Merits of the Cause (having cut off those general Insinuations which

which are of Force in all Cases or in none,) and we desire nothing more than a free Examination of them.

As to his Argument from *Fact*, that Contemners of Miracles in all Ages have admitted of the Truth of History, this may be true, or at least of their admitting some Parts of History; but the Difference of yielding or withholding their Assent in these Cases, lies in themselves not in others; in the State of their Consciences, not in the Nature of their Argument. Their Lusts are interested in the Belief of a *supernatural* Interposition, and therefore *That* is denied; they are not interested in an Account of Mens former Transactions, and therefore *That* is admitted; but the true Question is, Whether the Argument may not be reduced to the same in both Cases; for if it may, the Objection will return, and every Thing may and will be disputed, which can any Way affect Mens Passions or Interests.

But says the Dr. "the History of Miracles " is alway to be suspected of Course without " the strongest Evidence to confirm it; the " other (namely that of common Events) to " be admitted of Course without as strong " Reason to suspect it." Here thro' his Zeal against Miracles he has warped to the Side of

Credulity in other Reports ; for certainly there are many extraordinary Facts, which yet are *not* miraculous, (such as are indeed usually the Subjects of History) that are neither to be rejected nor admitted of Course without particular Examination. — “ Miracles however,” he says, “ are always to be suspected of Course “ without the strongest Evidence to confirm “ them.” Be it so. Providence has therefore proportionably granted us stronger Evidence, where our Assent to them was expected. And this may remind us of the great Inequality of those Testimonies which Dr. M. has parallel'd, when he mentions the Tradition of single Miracles wrought long before, as reported by Heathen Writers or by Popish ones, as a Circumstance weakning the Belief of those which are spoken of, as of their own certain Knowledge, and of daily Triumph, by a long Succession of primitive Writers. The Dr. tho' he mentioned the Rejection of the *unanimous* Testimony of the Fathers in the *Objection*, has taken no Notice at all of it in any Part of his *Answer*. This would have shewn the Difference of the Case in View from any by which he has attempted to invalidate it. The Fathers, in general, bear Witness to this Truth, without a dissenting Testimony. If they

they were not *all*, in different Ages and Places; in Concert to promote a Fraud, if they were not *all* either Fools or Knaves, if there was one wise and good Man among them, who had Sense enough to examine a plain Fact, and Honesty enough to discountenance a plain Forgery, then we have stronger Evidence to believe the Continuance of miraculous Powers among them, than would have been necessary for the Confirmation of a common Event. Their Enemies might have known by Inquiry, and their own Brethren and Disciples could not but know, whether there was any Truth and Reality in the Miracles that they so confidently and frequently boast of. And what would have been the Consequence, if there had not? If Dr. M. will reduce this Case, as he did that of their Apologies, to the Supposition of a *present* Instance, he may perhaps see the Force of it. If the *Methodists*, *Moravians*, or *French Prophets*, should challenge the Power of Miracles, and insist, that they were wrought every Day among them, and should be repeated for the Satisfaction of others; Does he believe that they would continue to gain Converts, or even retain those that they have, blinded as they may be? The Experiment we know was tried by the last of

the forementioned Sects, and answered accordingly. Their Pretensions were detected, and their Cause sunk with it. doct. M. says, that the Evidence of the Miracles of the *Abbe de Paris* within our own Times, is much stronger than any of those of the Primitive Times, and calls for a Reason why we must receive the one and reject the other. And I take the Reason to be, that they were not offered in like Manner to publick Examination. Their Enemies durst not attempt a free Inquiry like the Dr's, lest it should have ended in a Reflection on their own Cause. The Court, which no Doubt was satisfied of the Fraud, chose rather to proceed by Way of Authority than of Argument, lest that Method should be carried too far, and a like publick Examination might be demanded of those Miracles, which were wrought in Favour of received Doctrines. If Pretensions of this Sort were allowed to be detected, who knew where it might End? And therefore the Court took the most prudent Method, that could be taken, in a Country where Superstition is established, and implicit Faith required. The Adversaries of the Jansenists were forced to make them this principal Concession, and argued with them upon this

this Supposition, that miraculous Powers still continued in the Church. But the Heathens were under no such Restraint from their own Principles; but were at Liberty to examine freely, and often objected chiefly the Impossibility of the Facts. Whereas by the Dr.'s own Account, a Protestant, who could think and judge freely, having examined the Merits of that Cause, was of Opinion that the Facts alledged in the Case of the *Abbe de Paris*, might all be accounted for without the Supposition of a Miracle. Upon the Whole, I make no Doubt, that if the Miracles of that *Abbe* had been wrought and proposed to Examination here in *England*, they would have been detected, and his Followers have come to Shame and to nothing, like those of the *French Prophets*; whereas the Miracles of the primitive Church would even here have kept their Ground upon Examination; for they did so, when they were surrounded with as Inquisitive and sagacious Infidels as those of our Days; not having the Advantage that the *Protestants* had of Superstitious Opposers to deal with. I foresee it will be said, that one particular Infidel at least owned himself converted by the Miracles of the *Abbe de Paris*, but had he had more unbelieving Associates, who had dared

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idared to examine the Matter freely, he had probably stood in Need of better Arguments to work his Conversion.

It may not be improper to add, that whereas Dr. M. says, " a weak Man can hardly make any Report that is credible of such Events as are miraculous, tho' he may attest common Events as credibly as the Wisest," this Distinction may well be called in Question. For a *supernatural* Event may be as much a plain Object of Sense as a *natural* one. If a Man be cured at once, by a Word, of an inveterate Disease, this falls as directly under the Cognizance of his Senses, and may be as credibly reported by this supposed weak Witness, as if he had been recovered by a long Application of Medicines. The Certainty of the Miracle in such Cases depends not on the Judgment but the *Honesty* of the Relator; nay according to another Part of the Dr.'s Argument, his Want of Judgment or Skill ought to render his Testimony the less suspicious. In Truth, the Sincerity of the Witness is principally to be considered with respect to *Him*. The Article of Judgment is chiefly necessary in those, to whose Assent the Miracle is proposed. Whether the Fact be really *miraculous*, we may perhaps determine

mine better than the Witness, but the Truth of it must rest on his Testimony. Whether it can be accounted for in a natural Way, and whether the Cause be probably worthy of a supernatural Interposition, deserves indeed to be considered; and if the former should appear in the negative and the latter in the affirmative, then a plain honest Man, who must know the Truth of what he asserted, and who could have no private Interest in his own Assertion, may be a very credible Witness in the Case of a Miracle.

Now before the Civil Establishment of Christianity it cannot surely be suggested, that there was any private View in the Attestation of Miracles. Nothing could then tempt a Man to undertake the Profession of this Religion but a strong Conviction of the Truth of it; and if this was true, then all Falshood was forbidden by it under the severest Penalties of the other World. Unless therefore the primitive Writers can be supposed to ruin themselves wilfully both here and hereafter, they must be confessed sincere in their Attestation of miraculous Powers, and it must be owned that they in Earnest believed these Things themselves. Now these Things were of such a Nature, that they could not be deceived in them.

them. When *Irenaeus* said, that " all who
" were truly Disciples of Jesus, worked Mi-
" racles in his Name," this included *himself*
as well as others, and he must be either a wil-
ful Liar, or an unexceptionable Witness of the
Fact. The same Reflection is applicable to
the remaining Witnesses, and their *Unanimity*
in their Testimony is a strong Confirmation
of it.
We were promised indeed at first great Ex-
ceptions against the Integrity of these primi-
tive Writers. We were told that it should
be proved, that " they were extremely cre-
" dulous and superstitious, and that they
" scrupled no Art or Means by which they
" might propagate their Principles." But
how has this Proof been maintained? Why
the Dr. in attempting to shew some of their
Mistakes, has betrayed many of *his own*; and
has not been able to make good the Charge
of a *wilful Falshood* in any one Instance against
a *honest* Man of them, at least not of those,
who wrote before the Civil Establishment of
Christianity, whose Credit alone I am con-
cerned to defend. It is not necessary to vin-
dicato each particular Story of the *After-
Writers*, in Maintenance of the general Credit
due to the *first Fathers*, who assure us, that
miraculous

miraculous Powers continued among them. If these subsequent Relations will not bear Examination, let them freely be given up. But let it be remembred, that *Lying* for the Cause of *Truth* was no Doctrine or Practice among the *persecuted* Christians. Such Methods began not to gain Ground till *Prosperity* had corrupted the Professors of the Gospel, and much altered them from the Simplicity and Integrity of their Predecessors. If Tokens of such Prevarication soon afterwards appear, let Objectors make the most of the Concession, but it affects not *their* Characters, on whose Testimony we believe the Continuance of miraculous Powers after the Days of the Apostles. Notwithstanding Dr. M.'s frequent and uncharitable Insinuations of Inclinations to *Papery*, and his *Guess at the real Sentiments of his Opposers*, (p. 226.) they will be ready, I doubt not, to declare against all *real Superstition*, tho' not what he may call so; and will disclaim with Sincerity and Earnestness his Imputation of "being as little scrupulous" "about the modern as the ancient Miracles of the Church," or of being disposed "patiently to admit them all." But in order to cast a severe Reflection at once on them and on the primitive Writers, he adds that "this would

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" be most agreeable to that Rule, which is
 " prescribed by their primitive Guides, that
 " the true Disciples of Christ have nothing
 " more to do with Curiosity or Inquiry, but when
 " they once become Believers, their sole Business
 " is to believe on." The Citation is from Ter-
 tullian. *Nobis Curiositate non opus est post Ie-*
sus Christum, nec Inquisitione post Evangelium.
Cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere.
 (de Praescr. Heret. §. 8.) Now if *Nihil deside-*
ramus ultra credere means that their sole Busi-
 ness is to believe on, then I must go to School
 again, for I thought it had meant directly the
 contrary, that they had no Occasion to believe
 any Thing farther. It appears to me, that it
 was intended as a Caution against making any
 Addition to the Faith of the Gospel. He had
 been speaking before of those, who troubled
 themselves with vain Inquiries, which it was
 not possible or not material to answer, and then
 observes in the Words referred to that " Chris-
 tians had no Occasion to indulge their Cu-
 riosity or engage in Inquiries of that Kind,
 " for that when once they had attained to
 " the Belief of the Gospel, they had no Oc-
 casion to believe any Thing farther." He
 adds the Reason in the very next Sentence.
 " For this is one of the first Articles of our
 " Belief,

" Belief, that it contains all Things necessary " to be believed." *Hoc enim prius credimus, nihil esse quod ultra credere debeamus.* And now let those, who are so disposed, believe on in the Dr. but those, who come without Prepossessions to the Inquiry, will, I hope, examine all the original Passages themselves, and not give *implicit* Faith to any Authority ancient or modern. If there are any, who discourage free Inquiries, I think they are much to blame, but let them only bear the Blame; and let not undistinguishing Reflections be cast on all who desire to contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints. Reason under the Direction of Revelation will be a sure Guide, and we may avoid the vain Follies of *Superstition* without plunging into the endless Mazes of *Scepticism*.

I have now gone through the Whole of the Dr.'s Inquiry, and have not wilfully passed by any thing which seemed material to his Argument. Give me Leave now briefly to recapitulate what has been offered, and to observe how much he has fail'd under every Head proposed and asserted by him.

His first Observation was, that all the *Apostolical Fathers* were silent on the Subject of

Miracles, and that this their *Silence* was a Proof that no such Miracles then subsisted, I have endeavoured on the contrary to shew that there are plain References in those Writers to miraculous Powers ; and that if there had not, the Inference from their *Silence* would hold much stronger on the other Side ; for that they could not have failed to have mentioned such a remarkable Cessation of those Gifts all at once, if it had really happened.

His second Argument against these Miracles was the Meanness of the Persons by whom they were said to be wrought, which he says were the lowest and most unworthy of the People. I have shewn that this is a Misrepresentation, that miraculous Gifts were not ascribed to them *exclusive* of others, that though they were sometimes particularly mentioned, as in them the Argument appeared in the strongest Light ; yet that from other Passages it is plain that their Superiors and Governors were equally favoured with them.

His third Argument was from the *Character* of the primitive Writers, whose Testimony he thinks unworthy of Credit in this Instance, because in his Opinion they have falsified in others. He singled out indeed for this Charge of Fallification but two of the many who bear

bear Witness to the Frequency of these miraculous Gifts; and I have offered Reasons to shew that he has grossly failed in the Support of this Charge against them. No *wilful Fraud* has been proved against them; and if there had, much Work would still have remained behind, to shew the same of the Rest. *Mistakes* prove nothing in the present Question, or if they did, the Dr. would no longer be a formidable Adversary to the Fathers.

A Review of the several miraculous Gifts was to supply a fourth Argument against the Reality of them. Some of these, he argues, were disproved by the Effect, namely, their Want of Success in the Conversion of the Heathen World: Others he thinks were overthrown by contrary Testimonies expressing or implying the Cessation of them: Others he accounts for in a natural Way; and many he thinks unworthy a Divine Interposition. I have endeavoured to obviate each of these Suggestions, and to shew that these Gifts were frequently efficacious, uniformly consistent, really supernatural, and sufficiently important: And that the Defence of every particular Story is a Point very different from the Support of the general Question. Let each of these stand or fall by the Evidence attending

attending it; but let it be remembred that Impostures had never prevailed, if the Certainty of some supernatural Interpositions had not prepared the Way for their Reception.

The last Part of his Performance is to obviate the *Objections* against his Scheme, those particularly arising from the Injury done thereby to the Authority of the New Testament, from the publick Appeal and Challenge of the Christian Apologists; from the unquestionable Piety of the primitive Martyrs, and from the Danger of overturning the Faith of History. These I have endeavoured to restore to their full Force, and to shew that his Evasions have not overthrown them. Though he has offered somewhat by way of Amusement against these Objections, yet in Reality the chief Weight of them is allowed by himself, and his attempted Answer to some Parts of them has been shewn to be insufficient. I shall detain you no longer, but shall readily submit the Validity of the Dr.'s Performance, or of these Remarks upon it, to your most impartial Judgment,

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